Ex Don: Authoris.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE *Christian Revelation*, AND THE NECESSITY OF Believing it, Established.

In Opposition to all the Cavils and Insinuations of such as pretend to allow *Natural Religion*, and reject the *Gospel*.

By FRANCIS GASTRELL B. D. and Student of *Christ-Church*, *Oxon.*

Ye believe in God, believe also in me, John 14. v. 1.

LONDON,
Printed for *Thomas Bennet*, at the *Half Moon* in St. *Pauls-Church-Yard*, 1699.

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To the Right Honourable Sir John Holt, *Lord Chief Juſtice of* England, *and one of His Majeſties Moſt Honourable Privy-Council.*

My Lord,

THE Deſign of the following Diſcourſe being to prove the *Chriſtian Religion* in the moſt unexceptionable manner I could, I was reſolved to give the Enemies of our Faith as little Advantage againſt me in my *Dedication* as in my *Proof*: And 'tis for that Reaſon I have preſumed to offer theſe Papers to your Lordſhip, as being well aſſured that your Lordſhip's Name and Character will not only Juſtifie this

Addreſs, but Recommend the Cauſe I am defending.

For to whom could an Advocate for *Chriſtianity* better direct his Defence, than to a ſerious Believer, and a great Example, placed in a high Station; whoſe Profound Knowledge of Law and Government has fully convinced him of the *abſolute Neceſſity of Religion in general*, and the *Reaſonableneſs and Wiſdom of the Chriſtian Inſtitution*; and who in a long, diligent, and impartial Adminiſtration of Juſtice, muſt be very well acquainted with all the *Ways* and *Methods of proving Matters of Fact*, and nicely underſtand the Force and Proportion of every Proof.

I ſhall not take upon me, in this place, to ſet forth all the Extraordinary Qualifications your Lordſhip is Maſter of; becauſe, moſt of them being imployed in the

the Service of your Country, they have already procured you the juſt returns of Gratitude and Eſteem from the Publick, which has received the benefit of them: But this I think my ſelf more particularly obliged to mention, for the Honour of the *Chriſtian Religion*, that it is to the Influence of that Holy Doctrine your Lordſhip owes the moſt advantageous Diſtinctions in your Character.

What other Account can be given of that Firmneſs and Steadineſs of Mind which your Lordſhip has preſerved in all the difficult and trying Circumſtances that different Turns of State, and different Meaſures of Policy have ingaged you in? When new Intereſts and new Dangers aroſe, and every thing chang'd about you, it muſt be wholly owing to *Chriſtian Principles* that your Lordſhip always kept

kept your Ground and your Poſture.

To the ſame Cauſe it muſt be aſcribed that your Lordſhip has never ſtained your Publick Character with private Immoralities. Notions of *Honour* and *Reputation* may preſerve a Man's Dignity upon the Bench; but 'tis only a Juſt and Awful Sence of *Religion* that can make him Reverence himſelf at home.

And in a Corrupt Age, where Impiety is grown Faſhionable, and has Quality and Title to Countenance it, 'tis no ſmall Sign of your Lordſhips regard for Religion, that you judge it for your Honour to have it known, that you make *the Scriptures* the Rule of your own Life, and think it the higheſt Concern of all Humane Laws and Conſtitutions to ſupport their Authority and Obligation.

For

For all theſe Reaſons, my Lord, it muſt be very proper for any Perſon that appears in the *Chriſtian Cauſe* to Addreſs his Endeavours to your Lordſhip; eſpecially if it be conſidered that, beſides your great Capacity to make a right Judgment of the Proofs alledged for it, you have no other Conſiderations to ingage you in the Intereſts of *Chriſtianity*, but thoſe of Truth, and the Happineſs of Mankind. It cannot be ſaid of your Lordſhip, that the Credit or Advantages of your Profeſſion are concerned in the Defence of the *Goſpel*; you derive none of the Honour and Greatneſs you poſſeſs from the *Church*; and therefore your Lordſhip's Example is a very good Argument to Unbelievers, that thoſe who are peculiarly ſet apart for the Service of God are not carrying on a ſeparate Intereſt from the reſt of the World; but are promoting

promoting all they can the Univerſal Good of Mankind.

I might, among other Inducements to the preſent Dedication, reckon perſonal Favours: But I muſt own, that though I have all the Gratitude imaginable for the Honour of your Lordſhip's good Opinion and kind Intentions; and though I have no greater Obligations to any Man Living than to your Lordſhip; yet nothing of that Nature would have produced ſuch an Addreſs as this, if I had not been determined by more publick Conſiderations to intereſt your Lordſhip in the Cauſe I have undertaken. I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's moſt Obliged, and moſt Humble Servant,

FRANCIS GASTRELL.

THE

THE

PREFACE.

WHen Chriſtianity *firſt appeared in the World, the Light and Influence of it were ſo ſtrong, that it bore down all the Powers of Vice and Falſhood, and made one of the worſt Generations of Men, that perhaps ever lived ſince the Flood, a moſt aſtoniſhing Example of the greateſt Vertue and Piety that Humane Nature has yet reached; but now the Spirit of Wickedneſs ſeems to have recovered it ſelf, and to threaten Revenge to that Religion which has ſo often tri-*

umphed over it : *And* Deiſm *is employed by the great Enemy of Mankind, to do what* Atheiſm, Superſtition, *and* Idolatry, *never could effect.*

And indeed it has pleaſed God to ſuffer Irreligion, to ſpread ſo far under this new Title, that one would be apt to imagine it had, like the Lying Spirit *we read of in the Time of* Ahab, *a ſolemn Permiſſion* from the Lord *to* go forth, perſwade, and prevail: *For what other Account can be given of the Original and Growth of ſuch a Deluſion, which has no manner of Foundation either in* Reaſon *or* Fact *to ſupport it?*

'Tis true Deiſm *is look'd upon as a more defenſible Poſt than* Atheiſm; *and when we obſerve with what ſeeming Calmneſs, and Serenity, ſome deny the* Chriſtian Religion, *with what Contempt they treat* the Holy Scriptures, *and with what Boldneſs they ridicule the* Hiſtory *and* Doctrine of the Goſpel, *we are tempted to ſuppoſe that theſe Men muſt certainly have a great deal to ſay for themſelves, or otherwiſe they*

they durſt not thus deſpiſe what they could not prove to be falſe, nor bear up againſt if it ſhould be true.

But whoever has that regard for Truth and Happineſs, as to conſider the Pretences of Chriſtianity, *and to examine carefully the Proofs it ſtands upon, will be throughly and effectually convinced, that thoſe who deny* Revelation, *have as little ground for their Infidelity, as thoſe that diſclaim* all Religion; *and that the Confidence of the one, as well as the other, is only the Effect of a deſperate, not a well-defended, Cauſe.*

For if Matters of Fact *are capable of any Proof, if we can have any* Evidence of Things not ſeen *or heard by us,* the Chriſtian Religion *has as ſure an Eſtabliſhment as any other part of our Knowledge, which does not conſiſt in pure* abſtract Ideas, *or* immediate Senſations.

This, upon the ſtricteſt Enquiry I have been able to make, is become ſo fixt an Opinion with me, that I dare venture to

affirm, not only that there never was any Impoſture in the World, which had ſo many plain Marks and Characters of Truth upon it, as the Chriſtian Religion *is attended with, but that there never was any true Hiſtory of Things whatſoever ſo well atteſted; That 'tis impoſſible for the united Wiſdom of Men to contrive any Scheme of Events that ſhall be delivered down to Poſterity, with ſo many certain Signs and Monuments of its Truth; and that there cannot be any Suppoſition invented, that will be fuller fraught with Abſurdities, than that of the Chriſtian Religion's being an Impoſture.*

Theſe are Aſſertions I have endeavoured to make good in the following Diſcourſe; and I hope I have in ſome meaſure performed what I undertook; but if I have not ſaid enough to communicate the ſame Conviction to others, which I feel my ſelf, the Fault muſt lie wholly in the Management, not the Proof. For, in the Purſuit of this Argument, I found my ſelf

ſelf on every ſide ſurrounded with ſo much Light, that I am ſure there's Proof enough to be made of what I have here advanced, though the Evidence I have brought for this Purpoſe ſhould appear to have been choſen ill, or applied wrong.

But, after all, there's no need of proving ſo much as this to Unbelievers: 'Tis a ſufficient Anſwer to them if it can be ſhewn, that the Chriſtian Religion has as juſt a Pretence to be believed as any other Matters of Fact not queſtioned by them; and that nothing they have to urge in behalf of Infidelity, can leſſen the Credit of this Revelation; which is ſo eaſie a Task, that whoever engages in the defence of the Goſpel, will find it much more difficult to meet with Objections than to anſwer them.

For my part I muſt profeſs, that in all the ſearch I have had occaſion to make into Natural *and* Revealed Religion, *I never could meet with any one Objection to ei-*

ther of them that would bear the Form of an Argument. Several new Plans and Models of Philoſophy have been framed, and a great many new Hypotheſes raiſed in all Parts of Learning; and every one of them has been ranſacked to furniſh Matter for Infidelity; but all to no purpoſe: There are no ſuch grounds of Knowledge laid by any Man, but Religion may be proved from them; And I don't know of any Propoſitions whatſoever, advanced by any Philoſopher, Ancient or Modern, which, if they are not ſuch as plainly imply a Denial of Religion, can prove any thing againſt it.

Some have openly declared for Irreligion, *and have made a Philoſophy on purpoſe to maintain their Cauſe; others have covertly, under falſe Pretences, thrown out ſeveral Opinions and Doctrines, with a Deſign to weaken ſome or other of the main Principles of our Faith; but in vain are all theſe* Fiery Darts of the Wicked, *and* the Arrows of thoſe that ſhoot

ſhoot in ſecret; *no Philoſophy or Humane Wiſdom can prevail againſt the Almighty. In the open Attempts of impious Authors, the Force they make uſe of is unſupported, and often recoils upon themſelves: And as to thoſe diſhonourable Writers, who endeavour to wound Religion by Hints and Inſinuations, nothing* expreſſed *in their Books is ſufficient to make good what they* mean. Epicurus *and* Lucretius *may affirm that there is no Providence, and no Future State; but no other Propoſitions in their Philoſophy will prove there are none:* Hobbs *and* Spinoza *may intend to undermine the Common Faith of Chriſtians; but there's nothing directly advanced by either of them, that, if it were allowed to be true, could infer any thing to the prejudice of the firſt general Principles and Proofs either of* Natural *or* Revealed Religion.

For a through Confirmation of which Truth, I have in treating of both these Subjects, endeavoured to form my Proof upon such common unquestionable Principles, as every body, of what Sect soever in Philosophy, must needs grant. 'Tis true indeed most of the Notions imployed in the Cause of Infidelity, are false, as well as unconcluding; and upon both these Accounts deserve a particular Answer, in order to prevent the Mischief they might probably do among the Unwary and Unstable. But I looked upon that as the surest and most effectual Way of defending Religion, *which would cut off all Objections at once, and put the Cause upon a general Issue; this is the way I have taken in both Discourses, and I am sure the Method cannot fail if the Performance be but Answerable.*

If we are such Beings as I have described, and every body by consulting himself may find; and if there are such Appearances in the World, as every Man that

that will look abroad may perceive, then are all the Principles of Natural *and* Chriſtian Religion *certainly true: And if we are not ſuch Creatures, that have ſuch Powers and Capacities, and act for ſuch Ends and Motives as we feel in our ſelves; and if we are not ſure that the Frame of the World, and the Publick State of Humane Affairs do appear to us in ſuch a manner as we imagine they do, then do we know nothing at all; and if the Inferences truly drawn from theſe Appearances don't hold, none do. And if we have no Knowledge,* we are like the Beaſts that Periſh, *and have no Pretenſions to Happineſs neither.* Religion, Knowledge, *and* Happineſs *are all upon the ſame Foot, and are ſo cloſely united together, that there's no ſeparating one from the other, without deſtroying them all.*

But if Religion *be built ſo ſtrong, what ſupport can* Irreligion *have? What Principles can the* Atheiſt, Deiſt, *and* Libertine,

tine *Reaſon or Act upon? What new ways of Knowledge have they found out? Can he that denies a* God, *or* Providence, *ſhew us how the World was Made, or has been Governed without? Or can he that diſowns a* Future State *inform Mankind what and why they were, or reſolve them that Queſtion, Whether it were not better they had never been? How can he that denies the* Chriſtian Religion *prove, that we were not of Yeſterday, and know nothing but what we have ſeen our ſelves, or our immediate Forefathers have told us? And how can he that thinks both* Natural *and* Revealed Religion *to be Impoſture, perſwade himſelf to believe any thing elſe?*

The moſt reaſonable thing that ſuch Men as reject all Notions of Religion can do, is to believe nothing: But Scepticiſm *and* Suſpence *are ſo very difficult and diſagreeable to the Mind of Man, that every body muſt have ſomething continually to believe; and we do all of us give up our*

aſſent

aſſent in abundance of Inſtances, without ſtaying for the utmoſt conviction we are capable of: But none have been more remarkably diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the World for their Credulity, than the Irreligious; *it being commonly and truly obſerved of them, that they* believe *as unreaſonably and abſurdly as they* deny, *and that is what no body elſe does. What can be more extravagantly ridiculous, than to ſee an* Atheiſt *telling Fortunes, a* Deiſt *in queſt of the Philoſophers Stone, and a* Libertine *venturing all his preſent Pleaſures and Injoyments in a Rebellion for the good of his Poſterity? And yet ſuch is generally the Conduct of the* Irreligious; *and 'tis a juſt Judgment from God upon them, that they ſhould* be given up to believe Lyes, *and to act againſt their own Intereſt, to throw off the Principles of Truth, and not make the beſt of their Errours.*

Upon which account I think, if the Enemies of God *and* his Chriſt, *are ſo far reſolved*

ſolved upon the ways of Unrighteouſneſs, that they will not conſider the Proofs of their Duty in order to be reformed, they would do well to betake themſelves for Refuge to Ignorance *and* Amuſement, *rather than* Learning *and* Reaſoning: *For all the Improvements of Knowledge do only furniſh new Light and Strength to Religion, and adminiſter freſh occaſions of Shame and Confuſion to* Unbelievers; *and therefore 'twould be more adviſable for them to keep up their Infidelity to themſelves, than to let it looſe to the diſturbance of others: They had much better Intrench than Attack. For, beſides that, all attempts upon Virtue and Piety annoy the reſt of the World without any Advantage to their Cauſe that make them, 'twould be more for their Eaſe to lie quiet. For arguing and objecting againſt Religion, and making Proſelytes to Infidelity, are not only certain Signs of preſent uneaſineſs, but will very probably create them a great deal more. If they will be continually diſputing*

diſputing and preſſing their Objections they will be ſure to meet with ſomething or other to puzzle and ſtartle them; and this may awaken their Fears, and raiſe new Diſquiets in their Mind, which may at laſt end in a juſt Deſpair, when they will be able to repent of nothing but this, that they were not content to injoy the Fruits of Irreligion *without offering to defend it.*

I heartily wiſh ſuch Advice as this to Unbelivers were needleſs, and that they were ſeriouſly diſpoſed to imbrace a more reaſonable and laſting Satisfaction, by entering upon an humble and impartial Examination of the Proofs of the Chriſtian Religion. *But this being to be lookt upon as an Effect of* Extraordinary Grace, *all that can be expected from the Endeavours of thoſe, that undertake to ſet theſe Proofs in the beſt light they can, is to* ſtop the Mouths of Gainſayers, *and to prevent the miſchief of* Infidelity *from ſpreading further than it has done: And 'tis*

my

my ſincere Prayer to God, that the following Diſcourſe may have a ſhare, with many other upon the ſame Subject, in contributing to ſo good an Effect.

All that I have to warn my Readers of is, that if any of them ſhould be inclined to judge, that the Abſtract *I have given* of the New Teſtament, *and the* Proof of the Common Matters of Fact *there Related, either unneceſſary, or too long, they would paſs over theſe parts and leave them to be read by thoſe for whom this Diſcourſe was principally deſigned: Moſt of which I believe will know more of the* Chriſtian Religion, *from that* Abſtract *of it I have drawn up, than they did before. And I durſt not preſume ſo far upon them as to take the* Common Matters of Fact *for granted, becauſe, if they are true, I look upon all the other as demonſtrable from them; and therefore I was willing to lay the Foundation as firm and as broad as I could*

could, that it might bear the weight of what I was to build upon it; and I perſwade my ſelf I have all along taken ſufficient care not to overload it.

I have not been preciſe as to Time, and ſome other Circumſtances relating to the Hiſtory of Chriſtianity, *becauſe what I was to prove is as fully made good within the Latitude allowed as if it had been more punctually determined.*

THE

ERRATA.

In the Book.

PAge 31. line 10. *know* read *knows*. p. 39. l. 14 *meaſure* r. *meaſures*. p 41. l. 27. *him*, r. *him*; p. 44. l. 5. *Diſcourſes* r. *Diſcoveries*. p. 53. l. 19. *as* r. *a*. p. 59. l. 10. *too true* r. *to be true*. p. 62. l. 24. *happen'd* : d. : p. 67. l. 26. *of* r. *as*. p. 76. l. 12. *Tear* r. *Years*. p. 79. l. 9. r. *countrey*; p. 99. l. 13. r. *muſt be*. p. 106. *inſtanced, in*. d., p. 107. l. 6. *Words* r. *Records*. p. 109. l. 14. r. *Diocletian*. p. 110. l. 24. *ſence* r. *force*. p. 112. l. laſt. *then* r. *there*. p. 115. l. 23. *deſigns* r. *deſign*. p. 140. l. 22. r. *according to*. p. 160. l. 22. *Relation* r. *Relators*. p. 163. l. 26. r. *Perceptions*. p. 174. l. 12. r. *truth of*. p. 192. l. 2. *execute* r. *excite*. p. 211. l. 14. r. *ſome ſuch*. p. 228. l. 3. *ever* r. *never*. p. 240. l. 6. *then*. r. *than*. p. 287. l. 10. ; r., p. 293 l. laſt. ? r.; p. 298. l. 19. *at* r. *of*. p. 304. l. 23. *to be* d. *be*. p. 316. l. 10. *Scheme* r. *Scene*. p. 337. l. 11. *Motives* r. *Monuments*. p. 339. l. 5. *were* r. *are*. p. 353. l. 2. r. *frame of*.

The Certainty of the

Chriſtian Revelation,

AND THE

NECESSITY

Of BELIEVING It.

HAving in a former Diſcourſe proved that there is a *God*; That this *God* has appointed us a certain Rule and Order of Life; That he has obliged us to Conform to his Will and Appointments, by annexing Happineſs to our Obedience, and Miſery to our Diſobedience; That the Rule he has given us to go by, is whatever we can, upon our own Enquiry, or the Information of others, diſcover to be agreeable to our pureſt and moſt unprejudiced Reaſon; all which is comprehended

under the Name of *Religion:* Having likewiſe ſhewn that a general and exact Obſervance of all the Duties of ſuch Religion, would advance the Happineſs of Mankind to the higheſt degree, they are in this their Mortal Condition capable of; and from theſe Principles, together with the preſent Irregularity of things in the World, having made it appear that there muſt be a *Future State*, of Rewards and Puniſhments proportion'd to the different behaviour of Men in this: I have now farther undertaken to prove that, beſides thoſe Tokens and Indications God has given of himſelf, his Will and Deſigns in the Nature and Conſtitution of things, which are diſcoverable by right well-exerciſed *Reaſon*; he has in a more extraordinary manner, *viz.* by *Immediate Revelation* from himſelf made known his Mind to us; by which means he has given us a clear and intire view of the forementioned rational Truths, render'd our knowledge of them more certain, plain, and particular, diſcovered a great many new Truths which the unaſſiſted force of Human Faculties could not have found out, and eſtabliſhed new Rules and Meaſures of Duty, over and above

thoſe our Reaſon was before, by its utmoſt efforts, able to inform us of.

All which extraordinary Diſcoveries I affirm to be contained in the Books which go under the Name of the *Old* and *New Teſtament*: from whence I inferr that all the Doctrines, Precepts and Directions delivered in the *Old* and *New Teſtament*, are obligatory to us ſo far as they are there declared to be ſo; that is, they are to be believed and obſerved in the Way and Manner, and upon the Reaſons and Motives there propoſed; and conſequently, that at preſent, the true and adequate Rule of Human Life, is what we call the *Chriſtian Religion*.

But becauſe, as 'tis plain from the nature of all *Revelation*, the truth of what is pretended to be revealed muſt depend upon the proof of *Matters of Fact*; I ſhall take this Method of eſtabliſhing the Certainty of the *Chriſtian Revelation*.

1. Having premiſed ſome things concerning thoſe particular Facts I deſign to inſiſt upon; I ſhall give a ſhort Abſtract or Summary of the Chriſtian Scheme, as we find it delivered in the *New Teſtament*.

2. I ſhall prove by ſuch direct Arguments as *Matters of Fact* are proveable by, that all the principal *Matters of Fact* related in the *New Teſtament*, are true.

3. I ſhall endeavour to make good the ſame Propoſition indirectly, by ſhewing the Abſurdity of a contrary Suppoſition, and the weakneſs of all the Difficulties and Objections raiſed againſt the truth of thoſe *Facts*, or of *Revelation* in general.

4. I ſhall ſhew the ſufficiency of ſuch a proof as ſhall be given under the former Heads to induce us to believe the *Chriſtian Religion*, and to render us inexcuſable if we do not.

As to what concerns thoſe particular *Facts* I deſign to inſiſt upon for the proof of the *Chriſtian Religion*, there are theſe three things neceſſary to be obſerved.

Firſt, I take all this for granted, *viz.* That there are ſuch Books as thoſe I call the *Old* and *New Teſtament*, that they are in the hands of a great number of People

People of different Countries in the World, and are with a very little variation the ſame every where: That the greateſt part of thoſe in whoſe hands they are, who are called *Chriſtians*, profeſs to believe that the *Matters of Fact* there Recorded are true, and that the Doctrines came from *God*, and are appointed by him as the Rule and Meaſure of their Actions; but more eſpecially thoſe delivered in the *New Teſtament*, which they look upon to contain a full Scheme of their Duty: That a large Sect of Men, called *Jews*, profeſs to believe the ſame of the *Old Teſtament* as the *Chriſtians* do, but reject the *New*, and make the former only the Rule and Meaſure of their Duty; and that a great many of theſe, both *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, do really and ſincerely believe what they profeſs, and endeavour to order their Lives accordingly. All which *Matters of Fact* are ſuch as I have no manner of reaſon to ſuſpect any body will deny me.

Secondly, I inſiſt wholly upon the proof of thoſe *Matters of Fact* which are recorded in the *New Teſtament*; not only becauſe the *Chriſtian Religion*, the Certain-

ty of which I have undertaken to eſtabliſh, is fully confirmed by the truth of thoſe *Facts*: But becauſe the *Old Teſtament* is ſuppoſed, and every where appealed to in the *New* as true and authentick, upon which account, a thorough effectual proof of the latter, will be of it ſelf a ſufficient eſtabliſhment of the former. Beſides, many of the ſame Arguments that I ſhall make uſe of to ſupport the *Chriſtian Revelation*, are in like manner applicable to the *Jewiſh*: And therefore I ſhall only conſider the *Old Teſtament* as a Book that was extant long before the *Chriſtian Religion* appeared in the World; and which was then, and had been long before eſteemed by the whole People of the *Jews*, as a Book that contained the *Revelations of God*; and I ſhall concern my ſelf no farther in the proof of theſe ancient Writings, than to defend them from the little Cavils and Objections raiſed againſt them by Modern Unbelievers, with a deſign to weaken the Certainty of *Divine Revelation in general*, and conſequently to invalidate the proofs of the *Chriſtian Religion*.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I diſtinguiſh all the *Matters of Fact* obſervable by us in the *New Teſtament*, into *Common* and *Extraordinary*; ſuch as are conformable to thoſe *Facts* we have often taken notice of before, or to thoſe Notions we have of the Natures and Powers of the Agents, which appear to be the immediate Authors of them; and ſuch as exceed all our Knowledge and Obſervation of what we call *Nature* and natural Powers: which *Extraordinary Facts* mentioned in the *New Teſtament*, I diſtinguiſh further into two kinds; ſuch as were immediately perceivable by ſome of the *Senſes*, of thoſe before whom they were done, and ſuch as were knowable only by *reaſoning* from the Natures of Things, and other concurrent or conſequent *Facts*. Of the firſt kind, are *Propheſies* and *Miracles*; of the ſecond, are *Divine Aſſiſtance* and *Revelation*. And thus I ſhall endeavour to eſtabliſh the *Certainty of the Chriſtian Religion*, by proving the truth of all the principal *Matters of Fact* contained in the *New Teſtament*, according to the Order and Diſtinction of them before mentioned, *viz. Common Hiſtorical Facts*;

Prophecies and *Miracles*; *Divine Aſſiſtance* and *Revelation.*

I. But, for a better and clearer proſecution of my Deſign, I ſhall in the firſt place, before I enter upon this proof, give a ſhort *Abſtract* or *Summary* of the *Chriſtian Scheme*, as we find it delivered in the Books of the *New Teſtament*: Wherein I ſhall conſider the *Matter* and *Subject* of theſe Books, and the *Manner* in which they are writ; with all the important Circumſtances belonging to them, that offer themſelves upon a careful and impartial reading. Which general view of of all the *Chriſtian Facts*, the truth of which I have undertaken to maintain, will not only prevent a great many inconvenient Repetitions, and ſhew the force of the ſubſequent Proofs in a ſtronger light, but give us ſuch an Idea of the *Chriſtian Religion*, as if carefully weighed and attended to, would render any further attempts to prove it unneceſſary.

It is plain to any one that reads over the *New Teſtament*, that it contains in ſhort, a Hiſtory of the Publication and Pro-

Propagation of certain Doctrines and Rules of living propoſed to the Belief and Practice of Mankind; together with an Account of the ſeveral Diſcourſes, Actions, Writings, Sufferings, and other remarkable Circumſtances in the Lives of the firſt Publiſhers, and ſome of the principal Propagators of thoſe Doctrines and Principles which make up the New Scheme of Religion here delivered.

But to take a more particular Survey of the *New Teſtament*, according to the ſeveral Parts or Volumes into which it is divided: In the firſt Four Books of it, call'd the *Goſpels*, we find a very large and particular Account of the Birth of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the firſt Author, as is there affirm'd, of that *Religion* which is now term'd *Chriſtian*; and his Birth is related to have been after an extraordinary manner in all the Circumſtances of it; *viz.* That he was conceiv'd by the *Spirit* of God, and the *over-ſhadowing of his Power*; That he was born of a *Virgin*; That his Conception was foretold, and his Birth proclaim'd by *Angels*; That his Coming into the World was ſignified by a *Star*, which brought *Wiſe Men from the Eaſt* to worſhip him; That mighty Things were immediately before and after his Birth

ſaid

ſaid of him by Angels, and *Juſt* Perſons, moved by the Spirit of God. From the Birth of Chriſt, 'till he was thirty years of Age, very little is mentioned of him beſides ſome Diſcourſe he held with the Doctors in the Temple at Twelve; but when he *began to be about thirty*, he was *baptized* by *John*, who is ſtil'd his *Forerunner that prepared the way* for him; and at his Baptiſm the *Heavens were opened*, and the *Spirit of God deſcended upon him like a Dove*; and *a Voice was heard from Heaven, ſaying, This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleas'd.* The principal Things that are afterwards recorded of him, are his *calling of Diſciples and Apoſtles*, his *Sermons and Inſtructions* to the People, his *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, and his *Sufferings*, *Death* and *Burial*, with ſome other remarkable Paſſages that happened after his Death.

His *Diſciples* and *Apoſtles*, but more eſpecially *Twelve* of them, were favoured with a nearer and more intimate Converſation than any of the reſt he directed his Inſtructions to. *Theſe* were the conſtant Companions of his Labours, and Witneſſes of his moſt private Behaviour; *Theſe* he inſtructed in a more plain and open manner than he did others, and commu-

communicated ſeveral things to *Them*, which he kept ſecret from his *common Auditors* and *Followers*: To *theſe* he gave a Commiſſion to teach and inſtruct the *Jews*, and to do mighty things among them while he lived, and to preach to *all Nations* after his Death, and propagate his *Doctrine* with Signs and Wonders.

He himſelf is repreſented as preaching and teaching throughout all *Judea*, and ſeveral of his Publick *Sermons* and *Diſcourſes*, as alſo many things which he ſaid in private to his Diſciples, are every where throughout the ſeveral *Goſpels* repeated; ſometimes in ſhort, and only the Subſtance of them, ſometimes more at large, in the ſame Form and Manner in which they were delivered.

The *Miracles*, or wonderful Things, mentioned to be done by Chriſt, exceeding all the Obſervation and Power of Mankind, are theſe: Faſting Forty Days and Forty Nights together; turning Water into Wine; Stilling Tempeſts, walking upon the Sea; telling the ſecret Thoughts of Men's hearts; curing the Blind, Lame, and Maimed; healing all manner of Diſeaſes with a word, or touch of his Garment; caſting out Devils and unclean

unclean Spirits, and reſtoring Men poſſeſſed with 'em to their former ſtate of health and ſenſe; feeding vaſt multitudes of People with a few ſmall Loaves and Fiſhes; by his bare Word cauſing a Fig-Tree immediately to wither, great numbers of Fiſh to be taken in a Net, and a ſingle Fiſh to come to the Hook with Money in its mouth to pay his Tribute with; transfiguring himſelf before ſome of his Diſciples, ſo that they ſaw the faſhion of his Face alter'd, and his Raiment chang'd; raiſing the Dead, and riſing himſelf after his Burial; appearing to his Diſciples after he was riſen, and converſing with them Forty Days, ſometimes being known by them, and ſometimes not, according as he pleaſed; and at laſt in their Preſence aſcending up into Heaven.

The Matters we find in the Goſpels *foretold* by Jeſus Chriſt, were his own Paſſion, Death, Reſurrection, Aſcenſion, and Miſſion of the Holy Spirit or Comforter, with ſeveral particular Circumſtances of them; the Perſecutions and Sufferings of his Diſciples; the Death of ſome of them, and the manner in which they were to dye; as alſo their future Glory

Glory and Office at the end of the World; the Rejection of the Jews; Vocation of the Gentiles; Succeſs and Continuance of the Goſpel, or Chriſtian Religion; the Appearance of Falſe Prophets and Teachers, and Falſe Chriſts; the ſpringing up of Hereſies, and falling away of Profeſſors; the Deſtruction of the Jewiſh Temple, and Conſtitution, and Diſperſion of that whole People, with many ſtrange and terrible Signs foregoing; and laſtly, the ſecond Appearance of himſelf in Glory to judge the World, which is ſet forth in a very large and pompous Deſcription of the whole Scene.

As to his *Sufferings*, *Death*, and *Burial*, and what followed afterwards, which are the next things that challenge our Conſideration, we read that he was betrayed by one of his Diſciples, denied by another, and deſerted by all the reſt; that he was taken, and carried firſt before the High Prieſt of the Jews, and afterwards before *Pilate* and *Herod*; that he was ſcourged, mocked, ſpit upon, reviled, and, at laſt, upon falſe and frivolous Accuſations, condemn'd by *Pilate*, contrary to his Conſcience, only to pleaſe the Jews; and then crucified between Two common Malefactors,

Malefactors, one of which reproached him, the other believed in him; while he was upon the Croſs, the *Sun was dark'ned, the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain*, and *the Earth quaked*, and *the Rocks rent*, and *the Graves were open'd, and many Bodies that ſlept aroſe, and came out of their Graves after his Reſurrection, and appear'd unto many*; his Body being taken down from the Croſs unbroken, was laid in a Sepulchre hewn out of a Rock, with a Stone roll'd to the door of it; and the Sepulchre was made ſure, by ſealing the Stone, and ſetting a Watch; notwithſtanding which he roſe again the Third day after he was buried, and appear'd to his Diſciples, and many others: But the Soldiers that were appointed to watch the Sepulchre, being affrighted by the appearance of an Angel, who deſcended from Heaven, and roll'd back the Stone from the door, came into the City, and ſhew'd the Chief Prieſts all the things that were done, and had Money given them to ſay his Diſciples came by Night and ſtole him away; after this, the Diſciple that betray'd him repented of the Fact, brought back the Money he had received for betraying him, and hang'd himſelf.

This

This is the ſumm of what is contained in the Four *Goſpels*. In the next Book, call'd *The Acts of the Apoſtles*, we find the Eleven, who are peculiarly ſtiled *Apoſtles*, after their return from beholding the Aſcenſion of their Maſter, aſſembled together at *Jeruſalem* with the reſt of thoſe who were more particularly diſtinguiſhed by the Name of *Diſciples*; where they make choice of another *Apoſtle* to ſupply the room of *Judas* that had hang'd himſelf. After which choice, the twelve being *all with one accord in one place*, they were *filled with the Holy Ghoſt*, and *ſpake with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance*; which wonderful Gift of divers Languages was conferred upon them with very ſtrange amazing Signs and Appearances, *viz.* a *ſound from Heaven as of a ruſhing mighty Wind, cloven Tongues like as of Fire*, &c.

Having received this extraordinary Aſſiſtance, we find them wholly employ'd in preaching the things concerning *Jeſus*; interpreting the Scriptures of the *Old Teſtament* with relation to him; baptizing in his Name; converting People to the Belief of thoſe Facts recorded in the Goſpels, and the Doctrines built upon them;

them; exhorting Men to the Practice of the ſeveral Duties enjoin'd them by God, and delivered to them by the Miniſters of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and bidding them expect Salvation by Chriſt only; ordaining ſeveral Perſons under different Characters to aſſiſt in the Miniſtry; healing all manner of Diſeaſes; raiſing the Dead; and doing many other Signs and Wonders where-ever they come; and conveying the ſame Powers and Gifts to others they had received themſelves: By which means we read that the Goſpel was ſpread, and the number of Believers encreaſed, many Churches or Congregations were every where eſtabliſhed, and the Members of them kept ſo united by thoſe that were ſet over them; firſt in *Judea*, and *Samaria*, then in remoter Parts abroad where the Jews were ſcattered, afterwards in ſeveral Cities, Iſlands and Nations of *Aſia* and *Europe*.

With the Progreſs of the *Goſpel* or *Chriſtian Religion*, we have an Account likewiſe of ſeveral Attempts made in many Places to hinder and oppoſe the Eſtabliſhment of it, together with the Sufferings and Perſecutions of the firſt Apoſtles, and others choſen afterwards to be Aſſiſtants

to

to them in carrying on the ſame Work; many of which were beaten, impriſon'd, and many other ways afflicted and diſtreſſed, and ſome were put to death.

But a more particular relation is given of the Converſion, Travels, and Sufferings of *Paul*; all which appear to be very extraordinary. Several Diſcourſes of *Paul*, and other Apoſtles and Diſciples of Chriſt are ſet down at large. Some Prophecies alſo are mentioned of Holy Men, who are repreſented as being filled with the *Holy Ghoſt*, and ſpeaking by the *Spirit of God*; and ſome remarkable Judgments of God upon wicked Perſons are there recorded.

Theſe are the principal Matters which compoſe the Hiſtory of the *Acts of the Apoſtles*.

All the following Tracts or Volumes of the *New Teſtament*, are written in the form of Letters or *Epiſtles*, ſent from ſuch of the *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples* of Chriſt, as we find mention'd in the *Goſpels* and *Acts*, and directed, ſome of them to particular Perſons, ſome to large Societies of Men, of ſeveral different Countries, who had embraced the Chriſtian Faith.

In which *Epiſtles* are contained moſt of the ſame Rules and Precepts that are laid down in the *Goſpels* and *Acts*, many large and particular Explications of ſeveral Doctrines there delivered; and ſeveral new Doctrines which we do not meet with in thoſe Books, the Truth and Obligation of all which are frequently enforced by Arguments.

Moſt of the principal Matters of Fact recorded in the *Goſpels* and *Acts*, are referr'd to in the *Epiſtles*, and alledged as Proofs of the Truth of the *Doctrines* there taught, and of the Authority of the Teachers. Here are likewiſe ſeveral new Matters of Fact incidentally mentioned which we do not find in thoſe former Books; and ſome of the Facts there related are repeated here with new Circumſtances.

All the *Epiſtles* do abound throughout with Exhortations to a ſteady Belief of thoſe wonderful things ſaid and done by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and to a conſtant Practice of the Duties enjoin'd by them. In ſeveral of them there are ſome Prophecies too intermixed with theſe other Matters before taken notice of: And the laſt Epiſtle directed to the ſeven Churches in *Aſia*, which

which is by a peculiar Title ſtiled The *Revelation*, is almoſt wholly prophetical. Some of them alſo conclude with Salutations to, and from ſeveral particular Perſons therein named.

Theſe are the moſt remarkable things that occurr to a Man upon reading the *Epiſtles*.

Thus have I run through all the Variety of Particulars treated of in the *New Teſtament*. But in order to form a juſter and fuller Idea of the Subject of this Book, 'tis neceſſary to add ſome farther Conſiderations not formally expreſs'd in any one particular Volume or Chapter, but fairly and evidently collected from the whole Compoſure, or from ſeveral plain Paſſages here and there diſperſed through the ſeveral parts of it: Such as are the Characters of *Jeſus Chriſt* and his *Doctrine*; of thoſe that *believed* in him, and that *aſſiſted* him in the *publiſhing* and *propagating* his Goſpel; and of thoſe that *perſecuted* him, and all that bore Teſtimony to him, and oppoſed the Eſtabliſhment of his Religion.

As to the *Character of Jeſus Chriſt*, ſo far as it can be collected from the ſeveral Writings of the *New Teſtament*, it is in

ſhort this: His Birth, Life, and Death, were attended with extraordinary Circumſtances of different kinds: Thoſe who are called in Scripture his *Parents*, are ſaid to be deſcended from the Family of *David*, the greateſt King that ever reigned over *Judah* and *Iſrael*; but their preſent Condition when this Child was born, is ſet forth as very low, and the Employment that maintained them then, and afterwards, very mean; but they were Perſons that feared God, and lived very conformably to the Law of *Moſes*.

The *firſt Appearance* of Chriſt in the World, was prepared, accompanied, and followed by Prophecies, Viſions, Signs, and Wonders, Miniſtry of Angels, Adoration of Wiſe Men, Jealouſies and Fears of a Great King; together with the Doubts, Ignorance, Amazement, Neceſſities, and Flight of his Father and Mother.

His *Education* was ſuitable to the meanneſs of his *Birth*. Thirty years were ſpent at home in Obſcurity and Retirement, where he was ſubject and obedient to his Parents; but at the ſame time he *waxed ſtrong in Spirit, and encreaſed in Wiſdom, and the Grace of God was upon him*, to the Aſtoniſh-

niſhment of all his Kindred and Countreymen, who could not imagine *whence he had that Wiſdom.*

His whole Life afterwards was taken up in preaching, and inſtructing, and confirming his Doctrine and Authority by Signs and mighty Works, and by Arguments drawn chiefly from the Prophecies and other Paſſages of the *Old Teſtament.* He went about every where *teaching and doing Good:* He taught in the Temple, and other publick Places of *Jeruſalem*; he paſſed through all the Cities and Villages of *Judah* and *Samaria*, and the Neighbouring Coaſts, preaching and expounding the Scriptures to the People in their Synagogues: In the Fields, the Deſarts, and upon the Sea-ſhore, we find him attended with great multitudes who *heard him gladly.*

Thus was he conſtantly employed, from the firſt diſcovery of himſelf and his Goſpel to the World, 'till by Treachery and Malice he was apprehended and put to Death: In all which time that he publickly convers'd with Men, we have a great many ſurprizing things related of him, which do very much diſtinguiſh

his Character from that of any other Perſon.

He is repreſented as ſenſible of Human *Paſſions*, *Appetites*, and *Infirmities*; and yet free from all *Sin*, and endued with a Power of not feeling and relieving thoſe very wants he ſuffered.

He *loved*, *grieved*, and *was angry*; but theſe Affections were occaſion'd in him by a juſt Concern for the Glory of God, and the Succeſs of that great Work he came about, the Salvation of Mankind; aud they never exceeded their due bounds.

He felt *Hunger* and *Wearineſs*, yet faſted Forty days and Forty nights together, fed vaſt multitudes, and heal'd all manner of Infirmities by his miraculous Power; and, when his Diſciples brought him Meat, he refuſed it, ſaying, he had *Meat to eat which they knew not of*, and that his *Meat was to do the Will of him that ſent him.*

He lived in extream *Poverty* and *Want*: He *had not where to lay his Head*; and was deſtitute not only of the good things of this World, but of all the leſſer Conveniences of this Life: And yet we ſee when he ſent for an Aſs and Fole to ride into *Jeruſalem* with, the Owners let them go;

and

and when he ordered to have ſuch a room prepared for him to eat his laſt Supper in, 'twas preſently got ready for him; and both upon the bare Saying of his Diſciples that *the Maſter had need of them.*

His *Meekneſs*, *Lowlineſs*, and *Humility*, are very conſpicuous throughout his whole Conduct and Behaviour; and in ſeveral particular Inſtances; as his converſing freely with Perſons of the meaneſt Rank, chuſing ſuch to be his conſtant Companions, and moſt intimate Friends, declaring that he *came to miniſter to others, and not to be miniſtred to*, ordering thoſe he cured not to publiſh what he had done for them, refuſing to be King when the People would have made him ſo, waſhing his Apoſtles Feet, *&c.* Notwithſtanding which, in many other Inſtances, he diſcovers himſelf in very ſignal Characters of *Greatneſs*, *Majeſty*, and *Power*: For, not to mention what we have before rank'd under the Stile of *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, *he taught as one having Authority*; ſo that not only the People, but their Rulers and Teachers *were aſtoniſhed at his Doctrine*; he reproved the Scribes and Phariſees with Boldneſs; he enter'd into *Jeruſalem* with all the higheſt Solemnities of Triumph,

and drove out of the Temple all thoſe that prophaned that Holy Houſe, by applying it to common Uſes; he ſpake the Word, and whoever he call'd immediately *left all they had, and followed him*; he took upon him to forgive Sins; and he gave his Diſciples the ſame Power, as likewiſe a *Power againſt unclean Spirits to caſt them out, and to heal all manner of Sickneſs, and all manner of Diſeaſes, to tread on Serpents and Scorpions, and over all the Power of the Enemy*, ſo that *nothing ſhould by any means hurt them.*

Beſides all which, and many other Marks of *Greatneſs*, *Power*, and *Authority*, that appeared in the Actions of Chriſt, the things which he declares of himſelf, and which are attributed to him by his Diſciples, give us a much higher Idea of him.

He ſays of himſelf, that he is greater than the Prophet *Jonah* and *Solomon*; he proves that *David* call'd him his Lord; he affirms that *before Abraham was he is*; that *Abraham rejoiced to ſee his day*, that he *is the Chriſt, the Meſſiah* expected and propheſied of, the *Son of God, the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; that *all things are delivered to him of the Father*, who was *Lord of Hea-*

Heaven and Earth, and that *all things which the Father hath are his*; that *he and the Father are one*, that *he is in the Father, and the Father in him*; that *he came forth from his Father* when he came into the World; that he is *the Bread of Life that came down from Heaven*; that *this Bread is his Fleſh, which he will give for the Life of the World*; that *he has overcome the World*; that *no Man took his Life from him, but that he laid it down of himſelf*, and *had Power to take it again*; and that *when he leaves the World*, he *goes to his Father:* He owns that he is a *King*, but that *his Kingdom was not of this World*; He tells us that *all Power is given to him both in Heaven and in Earth*; that hereafter he ſhould *be ſeen ſitting at the Right Hand of the Power of God*, and that *he will come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him to judge the World*; that then *he ſhall ſit upon the Throne of his Glory, and before him ſhall be gathered all Nations*, and receive their Sentence from him according to their Works. He aſſures his Twelve Apoſtles that *he will ſend the Comforter* to them, who *ſhall teach them all things*, and *guide them into all truth*, and *ſhow them things to come*; that he himſelf *will be with them always unto the end of the World*; that *whatſoever*

they

they ſhall ask the Father in his Name, that he will do; that *he will prepare a place for them in his Fathers Houſe*; and that, when he comes to judge the World, they ſhall *ſit upon twelve Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael.* To all *thoſe that labour and are heavy laden* he promiſes that they ſhall find *reſt*; to thoſe that *ſell what they have* and *follow him*, that they ſhall have *Treaſure in Heaven*; to thoſe that *love him*, that they ſhall be *loved of his Father*, and that *his Father and he will come and make their abode with them. Whoſoever drinketh of the water that he ſhall give him*, he ſays, *ſhall never thirſt*, but that *water ſhall be in him a well of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life*; and *whoſo eateth his fleſh*, and *drinketh his blood, hath eternal life, and he will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* He tells one of the Thieves upon the Croſs, That *he ſhould be with him that day in Paradiſe*; and in general to all thoſe that *believe in him*, and *obey his Word and Commandments*, he gives aſſurance of Salvation and Eternal Happineſs in another World, beſides many other occaſional Bleſſings and Aſſiſtances in this; and thoſe that will not *believe in him, and obey his Goſpel*, he threatens with

with Eternal Puniſhment in another life, and with many Troubles and Calamities while they continue here.

Agreeable to which *Declarations* made by *himſelf*, are the *Language* and *Practice* of his *Diſciples* to him, and of him in his Life time and after his Death. They call him *Lord*, and *God*; Preach, Baptize, and Bleſs in his Name; and attribute a great many glorious things to him, which are in other places, in the ſame Manner and Expreſſion attributed to the *One Only Supream God*. They Worſhip him when alive, with all the external ſigns of *Divine Adoration*, and *Pray* to him after his Death, and expect all manner of *Grace*, *Aſſiſtance*, and *Spiritual ſtrength* from him here, and an *Eternal Reward* of their Labours, Sufferings and Obedience from him hereafter.

And as theſe are all Evident Marks and Tokens of an amazing *Greatneſs* and *Power* in *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſo are all his Sermons and Diſcourſes, his manner of Preaching and Converſing, and the whole Scheme both of his Life and Doctrine; manifeſt proofs of an extraordinary kind of *Wiſdom*.

It does not appear from the Hiſtory of the Goſpel, or any other parts of the *New Teſta-*

Teſtament, that *Chriſt* had read any other Book but the *Old Teſtament*, or that he had had the advantage of being inſtructed in the meaning and ſenſe of that by any Maſter or Teacher whatſoever: yet we find him *Teaching*, *Reaſoning*, *Anſwering* Queſtions that were put to him, and *Expounding* the *Scriptures* of the *Old Teſtament* in ſuch a manner, that all that heard him were aſtoniſhed at his *Underſtanding*, his *Doctrine* and *Anſwers*.

His uſual way of *Teaching* the People that believed on him, and reproving the Scribes and Phariſees, and others that were unbelievers, and ſought occaſion to find fault with what he ſaid, was by *Parables*, which were ſuch familiar Reſemblances of, or Alluſions to the common and moſt obſerv'd accidents of Life, as were more eaſily apprehended by ordinary Capacities, better attended to and remembred, and not ſo liable to Cenſure and Miſinterpretation as *plain* and *proper expreſſions* of the ſame Truths that were delivered this way, would have been: But ſometimes he both taught and reproved openly without any diſguiſe or reſerve, and ſome of his *Parables* were ſuch as were not underſtood even by his *Diſciples*,

Diſciples, till he was pleaſed in private to ſhew them the meaning of them, and acquaint them with the reaſon of this part of his Conduct.

His *Anſwers* to thoſe that accuſed him of any crime, as of *eating with Sinners*, *breaking of the Sabbath*, *Blaſphemy*, and the like; or that *ſought to entrap him in his Diſcourſe*, and to find matter of Accuſation againſt him, were very ſurprizing and unexpected; and ſuch as always ſilenced and diſappointed his Enemies.

His *Expoſition* of ſome parts of the *Scriptures* of the *Old Teſtament*, and the *Inferences* he draws from them, ſeem'd wholly new to all the *Jewiſh* Teachers and Expoſitors that heard him, and yet we do not read that they confuted, or ſo much as oppoſed either his *Comments* or his *Arguments*.

And in fine, his whole *Behavior* and *Converſation* were ſo carefully and wiſely ordered, that, though he was conſtantly watch'd and obſerv'd by cunning and malicious Men, of different Opinions, Deſigns, and Intereſts, yet no Man was ever able to convince him either of *Sin* or *Ignorance*, as is manifeſt from the Anſwers he gave to thoſe who Cenſured,

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or Deſpiſed him, or thought to puzzle him by difficult Queſtions, and from the whole Proceſs againſt him when he was condemn'd to die.

Thus lived *Jeſus Chriſt* a perfect Pattern and Example of the *Religion* he eſtabliſhed, in all Holineſs, and unblameableneſs of Converſation, ſhewing in all the Actions of his Life recorded of him an entire Submiſſion and Reſignation to the Will of *God*, and exceeding great Charity and Compaſſion towards *Men*.

And the ſame reaſon for which he *came into the World*, and was obedient to the Law of *Moſes*; for which he publiſhed his *Goſpel*, and upon that account endured the Contradiction and Perſecution of Sinners, was that alſo which made him *lay down his Life*, and ſubmit to all the Indignities and Torments that accompanied it; the only Cauſe, Motive, and End of all theſe Actions and Sufferings of *Chriſt* was the *love of Mankind*. As *he came into the World to ſave Sinners*, ſo *he gave his Life a ranſom for many*. To free Men from Eternal Miſery, render them capable of Eternal Happineſs, and to direct and aſſiſt them in the way of Salvation, was his *ſole Work* and *Deſign*. Theſe

Theſe are the largeſt and moſt remarkable lines in the *Character* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the *firſt Author* of that *Religion* we profeſs and defend.

In the next place I ſhall endeavour to give a ſhort draught or repreſentation of his *Doctrine* or *Goſpel*; or, as we now call it, *The Chriſtian Religion*, ſo far as it is plainly delivered in the Writings of the *New Teſtament*: But all Religion, as every one know, conſiſting of *Faith* and *Practice*, things to be *believed*, and things to be *done* in conſequence of ſuch Belief, I ſhall firſt conſider the *Chriſtian Faith*, and afterwards what concerns the *Practice of a Chriſtian*.

The ſum of the *Chriſtian Faith* is to believe in *One God*, ſuch as he is in the *New Teſtament* ſet forth to us, and in *Jeſus Chriſt his only begotten Son our Lord*, according to the Hiſtory and Character before given, or whatever elſe the *Scriptures* ſay of him: and by *Faith in him*, accompany'd with a *Sincere*, *Univerſal*, and *Perſevering endeavour* of *Obedience* to the Rules and Laws preſcribed by him; and a *hearty Repentance* for the Sins and Frailties we do at any time fall into, to *expect eternal*, *inexpreſſible Happineſs*; or, in caſe of

of *Infidelity* or *Diſobedience* attended with *Impenitency, to be aſſured* of ſuffering *Eternal, inexpreſſible Miſery* in another Life.

The particular Doctrines which give us an account of theſe things more at large, may be conſidered under theſe three Heads, *God*, *Chriſt*, and *Man*.

The *God* propoſed in the *New Teſtament* to be believed in, is repreſented as a *Spirit, Inviſible, Incorruptible, Eternal, that is, that was, and is to come, Almighty*, that *knoweth all things*, and yet whoſe *Judgments are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out*; *Creator of the World and all things therein*, who *upholdeth all things by his Power*; *in whom we live and move, and have our being*; *of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things: Moſt Holy, Juſt, Righteous and Perfect*; who *is to be worſhiped in Spirit and in Truth*, and with *purity of Heart*; *no reſpecter of Perſons*, of *great goodneſs and forbearance*, and yet who *will render to every Man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for Glory and Immortality, Eternal Life*; *but to them that do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath*: of whom it is further ſaid, That he is *the Father, the Father of*

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our Lord Jesus Christ, and *our Father*; a Title he is frequently and peculiarly distinguish-ed by, all over the *New Testament*: That *he sent his Son into the World to die for us*, and *by him reconciled us to himself*; That *the Sins of Ignorance he winked at*; but that *now at the appointed time*, when *Christ* came into the World, *he calleth all Men every where to repent*: That *at sundry times, and in divers manners, he spake in times past by the Prophets*, but *in these last days hath spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir, of all things, by whom also he hath made the World*; that he *foreknew, predestinated* and *elected* some *in Christ*, and *adopted* them for *Sons*, to be *Heirs of Salvation*, and to obtain a *Heavenly Inheritance*: all which are said to be *Sanctified by the Spirit of God*, who is often called the *Holy Ghost*, or *Spirit*, and *the Spirit of Christ* and of the *Son*, in several places of *Scripture* is joined together with *the Father* and *the Son*; and frequently talk'd of as a Person acting after such and such a manner, as *God* is in other places represented to do; and many of the same Titles, Characters, and Attributes, are ascribed to him as are ascribed to the *One Only Supreme God*.

The principal things that are taught us in the writings of the *New Teſtament*, concerning *Chriſt*, beſides what we have already mentioned in his Hiſtory and Character, are, That he *came into the World, took upon him the nature of Man, was obedient to the Law, offered himſelf a Sacrifice* upon the Croſs, *was made a Curſe, died, was buried, roſe again*, and *is ſat down at the right hand of God*, that thereby he might *redeem us from our Iniquities*, and *from the Curſe of the Law, be a propitiation for our Sins*, and *reconcile us to his Father through his Blood, that our Treſpaſſes might not be imputed to us*, but that *by his Obedience we ſhould be made righteous:* That he might *become the Mediator of a new* and *better Covenant* between God and Man, than that which God made with the People of *Iſrael* when he brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*, and that he might *aboliſh the Law of Commandments contained in Ordinances*, and *break down the middle Wall of Partition* between *Jew* and *Gentile*, that ſo both might be united in *one Building*, of which *Chriſt was the chief Corner Stone*, and all of us be *Members of one Body* or *Church*, of which *Chriſt is the Head:* That he might be *an Advocate with the Father when*

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we ſin, and *make continual Interceſſion for us*, that ſo upon our Confeſſion and Repentance, *God might forgive us our ſins, and cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs*. And laſtly, That he might obtain a *Kingdom*, and by that means *ſpoil Principalities and Powers, triumphing over them*; *deſtroy the works of the Devil*, and *put all Enemies under his feet*; and, that when *Death, the laſt Enemy, is deſtroyed*, he might *raiſe the Dead*, and judge the World: Part of which he has already performed, and the reſt he does, and will hereafter fulfil.

The moſt remarkable matters that occur in the *New Teſtament* concerning the Nature, Condition, and Circumſtances of Mankind, are theſe; *Adam* was the *firſt Man*, *Adam* was *firſt form'd*, then *Eve*; *the firſt Man* Adam *was made a living Soul*, the laſt *Adam*, by which is meant *Chriſt*, *was made* a *quickening Spirit*, which two different Expreſſions are diſtinguiſh'd as *Natural* and *Spiritual*, *Earthly* and *Heavenly*; *by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin*; *and ſo Death paſſed upon all Men, for that all have ſinned*: Adam *was not deceived, but the Woman being deceived, was in the Tranſgreſſion*; *notwithſtanding ſhe ſhall be ſaved in Child-bearing if they continue*

in Faith, and Charity, and Holineſs with Sobriety: Death reigned from Adam *unto* Moſes, *even over them that had not ſinned after the ſimilitude of* Adam's *Tranſgreſſion, who is the Figure of him that was to come: A Man is the Image and Glory of God, but the Woman is the Glory of the Man*; notwithſtanding which, all that are of the race of Mankind, are ſtiled and accounted in the Scriptures *ſinners, ungodly, enemies of God, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, ſervants of ſin and corruption, Children of the Devil, by nature Children of Wrath*; of whom it is ſaid further, That *Sin dwelleth in us, and reigneth in our Mortal Bodies*, that *when we would do good, evil is preſent with us*, and we find *the Fleſh luſting againſt the Spirit*, and *a Law in our Members warring againſt the Law of our Mind, and bringing it into Captivity to the Law of Sin:* The *Jews* are repreſented as *ſubject to Ordinances*, and *a Law which had only a ſhadow of good things to come*; and as *in bondage to weak and beggarly Elements*; and *all other Nations* are reckoned as *Aliens and Strangers from the Covenants of Promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the World.*

This is the ſtate of Mankind conſidered without relation to *Chriſt*; but *by Chriſt*

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we are cleanſed from our ſins, we are made free, we are juſtified by Faith in him, and *by his righteouſneſs we are ſaved.*

But the advantages which accrue to Mankind by the means of *Chriſt,* and the change that is made in our Condition by him, will be more fully underſtood from theſe following paſſages. As *by one Mans diſobedience, many were made ſinners, ſo by the obedience of one ſhall many be made righteous,* as *ſin hath reigned unto death,* ſo ſhall Grace *reign through righteouſneſs unto Eternal Life by Jeſus Chriſt.*

Curſed is every Man that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them; the Man that doth them ſhall live in them; but this being impoſſible, 'tis evident that *no Man is juſtified by the Law in the ſight of God;* if *there had been a Law given which could have given life, righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the Law,* but *the Scripture hath concluded all under ſin, that the promiſe of Faith by Jeſus Chriſt might be given to them that believe; In many things we offend all, but if we repent, and are baptized and believe,* and *ſhew our Faith by our Works,* and *perſevere unto the end we ſhall be ſaved; but if we believe not the Truth,* and *have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs,* and *repent not of the evils we have*

committed, we ſhall be damned. Thoſe that have embraced and obeyed the Goſpel of *Chriſt*, are ſaid to *have put off the Old Man with his Deeds, and put on the New Man, which is renewed in Knowledge after the Image of him that created him*; Thus *through Chriſt only* we are to expect *Salvation*, there being *no other Name given under Heaven whereby we might be ſaved*; which *Salvation if we neglect*, we ſhall be condemned by *God at the laſt day*, when *he comes to judge the World in Righteouſneſs by his Son*, whom *he has appointed Judge of the quick and dead.* Then ſhall we be *raiſed from the dead by Chriſt*, and receive *every Man according to his Works.* As *in* Adam *all died, ſo in* Chriſt *ſhall all be made alive*; and *ſince by Man came Death, by Man came alſo the Reſurrection of the dead. The dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible*, their *mortal corruptible* Bodies ſhall *put on immortality and incorruption*, and *thoſe which are alive* at the coming of Chriſt, *ſhall be changed in a moment, at the laſt Trump. As we have born the Image of the earthly Man* Adam, *ſo we ſhall alſo bear the Image of the heavenly* Man *Chriſt.* Then ſhall *they which have done* evil be condemn'd to *everlaſting torment and miſery*, and *they which have done*

good,

good, ſhall be rewarded with *everlaſting joy and happineſs in the preſence of God, and his holy Angels.*

This is the ſubſtance of what is taught, and propoſed to the *Faith* of Mankind in the *New Teſtament*; which I have expreſs'd, as near as ever I could, in the very language of *Scripture*, as my deſign plainly obliged me to do.

The other Branch of the *Goſpel*, or *Doctrine of Chriſt* which concerns the *Practice of a Chriſtian*, and may properly be ſtiled *Chriſtian Morality*, conſiſts of ſuch rules and meaſure of Action, as every one that *believes in Chriſt*, is obliged to conform his life to, and without which his *Faith* is *dead* and *vain*, *he is ſtill in his ſins*, and he muſt expect the *Wages of them*, *Eternal Death.*

The principal Heads of *Chriſtian Duty* are theſe.

To love *God*, and the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt* with all our heart, and with all our power; to honour, praiſe, and worſhip *God in Spirit and in Truth*, with purity of heart and intention, to ſubmit our Wills to his, and to aquieſce in all the diſpenſations of his Providence, with the

utmoſt reſignation of Mind and Judgment poſſible.

To *love our Neighbours as our ſelves*; *to do unto all Men as we would they ſhould do unto us*; to *forgive*, and *love our Enemies*; to *bleſs*, and *pray for thoſe that deſpightfully uſe us and perſecute us*; to *do good againſt evil*; and to *endeavour as much as in us lies to live peaceably with, to do good unto*, and *to promote the Salvation of all Men.*

To deny our *ſelves*, and to mortifie all our Luſts and Affections, to *take off our Affections from things on the Earth*, and *ſet them upon things above*, and to *have our converſation in Heaven*; to live chaſtly and *ſoberly in this preſent World*, avoiding all manner of exceſs and intemperance; to *bridle our Tongues*, to take care that we *offend not in word*; and *to bring every thought into Captivity to the Law of Chriſt*; *to think lowly of our ſelves, with all humility preferring each other*; to humble our ſelves in the preſence of God, and when we have done all that we can, to *ſay we are unprofitable Servants*; to *take up the Croſs of Chriſt*, and not only to bear Afflictions patiently, but to *glory in them*, and *rejoyce that we are thought worthy to ſuffer.*

Theſe

Theſe, and all other the particular Duties derived from them, we are required conſtantly and ſincerely to endeavour to perform, without a willful allowance of our ſelves, to *offend in one point*, or *to do evil that good may come of it*; and, whenever we have tranſgreſs'd any of theſe Rules of Life preſcribed us to act by, we are immediately to *break off our ſins by repentance.*

All which we are obliged to do for the *Glory of God*, in *pure obedience* to his Word and Command, in *love* and *gratitude* for all the Mercies we receive from him, and in *hope* and *expectation* of enjoying *Eternal Happineſs*, and eſcaping *Eternal Miſery* in another life, and upon no other account or proſpect whatſoever; theſe being the only true Ends and Motives of Human Action, and the only Grounds of Duty and Obligation.

We have conſidered the *Character* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and taken a ſhort view of the *Goſpel* or *Religion* he taught and recommended to Mankind: In the next place, let us ſee who, and what ſort of Men they were that firſt believed in him, who aſſiſted in the publiſhing and propagating

pagating his *Goſpel*; and who they were that oppoſed the Eſtabliſhment of it, and perſecuted *Chriſt* and all that bore Teſtimony to him.

Thoſe that were any ways concern'd in the receiving, publiſhing, and propagating the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, were *John* his *Forerunner*, his *Twelve Apoſtles*, other *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples*, and ſuch as were particularly ſet apart for the Miniſtry, and *Common Believers*.

John, who is ſtil'd *The Forerunner of Chriſt*, and one that was *to prepare the way before him*, was born of Parents who *were righteous before God*, and *walked in all the Commandments of the Lord blameleſs*; his Conception and Birth were attended with many extraordinary Signs and Wonders; then it is ſaid of him, *That he grew and waxed ſtrong in Spirit, and was in the Deſarts till the day of his ſhewing unto Iſrael, and his Rayment was of Camels hair, and his Meat was Locuſts and wild Honey*; afterwards *he came Preaching in the Wilderneſs of Judea*, ſaying, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, and *many were baptized of him in Jordan, confeſſing their ſins*: all he Preached to and baptized, he acquainted with the Character and near approach

approach of *Jeſus Chriſt*, whom in a particular manner he preferr'd to himſelf, and and by that means ſatisfied them that he was not the *Chriſt*, which before they doubted of: Little more is recorded of his Preaching or Diſcourſes, but only ſome particular advice to ſome Perſons that enquired of him what they ſhould do, and his reproof of the Multitude that came to him, and of *Herod*; for which laſt he was put in Priſon by him, and afterward beheaded. He did no Miracles, but the Auſterity of his Life, the Authority of his Preaching and Baptizing, and the Holineſs of his Converſation, made him lookt upon by all People as a *Prophet*. *Jeſus Chriſt* ſays of him, that he was *more than a Prophet*, and even *Herod* himſelf that beheaded him *fear'd him* while alive, and *obſerv'd him*, and *when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly, knowing him to be a juſt Man and a holy*.

The *Twelve Apoſtles* were all of them Perſons of a low Rank and mean Occupations; all the time they followed *Chriſt*, they ſeem'd not to be fully acquainted who he was, or what he deſign'd; ſeveral of his Diſcourſes they underſtood not, but

but wondered what the meaning of them ſhould be; they were ſeveral times by their Maſter reproach'd for want of apprehenſion, and knowledge in the Scriptures, after the plain Diſcourſes he had made of himſelf to them, and for want of Faith and Courage, notwithſtanding the many Miracles and mighty Works he had done before them, and they themſelves had done by his Commiſſion; they lookt upon him as a *Temporal Meſſiah* or *Deliverer*, who was to reſtore the Kingdom again to *Iſrael*, and they had ſeveral little Conteſts among themſelves who ſhould be greateſt in the Kingdom they fancied their Maſter came to eſtabliſh; they acknowledg'd him to be *the Chriſt the Son of God*, but they ſeem'd not to have rightly underſtood what they ſaid; when he was apprehended to be put to death, one of them *betrayed him*, all the reſt *were offended becauſe of him*, and fled; but one of them that return'd after him, ſolemnly deny'd him, and immediately repented; and he that betrayed him *repented*, and *hang'd himſelf*: After his death we find ſome of them bewailing themſelves as diſappointed in all the hopes and expectations they

they had conceived of him; and, when it was reported that he was riſen again, none of them would believe it till they ſaw him themſelves, and one of them was more remarkably incredulous in this point than the reſt, till he had received the ſatisfaction he deſired.

But after the *Aſcenſion of Chriſt*, and the choice of another *Apoſtle* in the room of him that had hang'd himſelf, we find *the Twelve Apoſtles* maintaining a different Character from what they had in their Maſter's life-time: Now they appear perfectly inſtructed in all things concerning *Chriſt*; whatſoever before ſeem'd ſtrange to them either in his Actions or Diſcourſe is all unriddled, and the *Scriptures* which before were difficult to be underſtood, are now made plain and manifeſt: And, as their Knowledge is enlarg'd, their Faith is ſtrengthened; no doubts or diſtruſts are now entertain'd, but they Preach the *Goſpel of Chriſt* with Authority and full Aſſurance, inſomuch that we find many more converted at their Preaching, than at *Chriſt*'s; they are endued with new Powers, which they had not whilſt their Maſter lived, and which did not *ſhew forth themſelves* in *Chriſt*; their whole lives

lives are taken up in Travelling and Preaching, and labouring with their hands to maintain themſelves; their whole Buſineſs and Deſign is to perſuade People to embrace the *Goſpel of Chriſt*; many are their Troubles and Sufferings upon this account, all which they undergo very chearfully, and never ſhew the leaſt ſign of fear or regret for any thing that happens to them; they never decline an opportunity of Preaching the *Goſpel*, or converting People to the Belief of it upon any proſpect of danger whatſoever, and no Power or Authority of Rulers and Governors, no ſeverity of Perſecutors can diſcourage them in their Work.

The other Perſons concern'd in the Miniſtry and Propagation of *the Goſpel of Chriſt*, by whatever Names and Offices diſtinguiſhed, whether *Apoſtles*, *Diſciples*, *Deacons*, *Paſtors*, *Teachers*, *Prophets*, *Evangeliſts* and *Presbyters*, *Biſhops*, or *Rulers*, ſo far as we know any thing of them by the Scriptures, were, all of them, very near of the ſame Character with the *Twelve*, for meanneſs of Birth and Education, ſimplicity of Manners,

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Steadineſs of Faith, and adherence to the Doctrines they taught, Piety and Devotion, Self-denial and Diſintereſtedneſs, Conſtancy and Reſolution under continual Sufferings, and a chearful preference of a future expectation in another Life, to all conſiderations whatſoever which this World could afford.

But one of them, named *Paul*, is repreſented to us under ſome particular Circumſtances, which make his Character very different from that of the reſt. He was Educated in all the Learning of the *Jews* at the feet of one of their greateſt Doctors; and by ſome paſſages we find in the Epiſtles aſcribed to him, we collect that he was acquainted with the Heathen Greek Authors; he was at firſt a zealous Enemy of the *Chriſtian Doctrine*, and a fierce Perſecutor of all that called upon the Name of *Chriſt*; but being in an extraordinary manner call'd by God, and by ſeveral wonderful Signs and Appearances converted to the *Faith of Chriſt*, he became a zealous Preacher of the *Goſpel*, had a larger and fuller Commiſſion of *Apoſtleſhip* granted to him than any of the Twelve, was exerciſed with a greater variety of Afflictions for the

the ſake of the *Goſpel*, *laboured more abundantly* in the eſtabliſhment of the *Chriſtian Religion* in the World, and writ more for the Confirmation of thoſe in the *Faith*, whom he had converted.

The generality of the firſt *Common Believers*, who were not call'd to the Miniſtry, were of the *loweſt ſort of the People*, and ſeveral of them *ſcandalous* and *notorious Sinners* before their Converſion; but ſome there were of the *better* and *richer ſort*, and ſome *Rulers* and *Prieſts* that believed in *Chriſt*, though but a very few that we read of. The Character of which Believers after the *Aſcenſion of Chriſt*, and firſt Sermons of the *Apoſtles*, was this; That *the Multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one ſoul, neither ſaid any of them that ought of the things which he poſſeſſed was his own, but they had all things common; neither was there any among them that lack'd, for as many as were Poſſeſſors of Lands or Houſes, ſold them, and brought the prices of the things that were ſold, and laid them at the Apoſtles feet, and diſtribution was made to every Man, according as he had need.* In other places it is ſaid of them that believed, That *before*

fore they were Servants of Sin, but after *they had obeyed from the heart that Form of Doctrine that was delivered them, they were made free from ſin, and became the Servants of Righteouſneſs*; that *in times paſt, they walked according to the courſe of this World, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh and mind*, but now *being created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good Works, did walk in them*; that ſome of them, who were before *Fornicators*, *Idolators*, *Adulterers*, *Abuſers of themſelves with Mankind*, *Thieves*, *Covetous*, *Drunkards*, *Revilers*, and *Extortioners*, were *waſhed and ſanctified by the Name of the Lord Jeſus*, and *by the Spirit of God*; *many* of them *that believed, came and confeſs'd, and ſhewed their Deeds*; *many alſo of them which uſed curious Arts, brought their Books together, and burnt them before all Men.* But, in proceſs of time, when the number of Believers encreaſed, tho' the greateſt part of them manifeſted *their Faith by their Works, turn'd from the Vanity of Idols to the Living God, renounced all the hidden Works of Sin and Darkneſs*, and *were aſhamed of thoſe things in which before they took pleaſure*; yet *Offences* and *Hereſies* did ſpring up among Chriſtians, notwithſtanding all the care of thoſe that

firſt planted the Churches, and thoſe that afterwards preſided over them; and ſome there were *that walked diſorderly*, that *Preached Chriſt out of Envy*, that *taught other Doctrines than what they had received*, that *turn'd after Satan*, that *loved this preſent World*, that *put away Faith*, and *made Shipwrack of a good Conſcience*; but theſe bore no proportion to the numbers of *the Faithful*, whoſe *Faith and good Works were ſpoken of throughout the World.*

Such were the *firſt Publiſhers* and *Believers* of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*. And the Perſons who endeavoured to diſcourage the Belief, and *oppoſe* the Eſtabliſhment of it, by all the means they could, but eſpecially by Contemning, Diſgracing, Reviling, and Perſecuting thoſe who were any ways concern'd in maintaining or propagating this new Religion, were *among the Jews*, their *Kings*, *Governors*, *Chief Prieſts*, *Elders*, and *Chief of the Jews*; as alſo the *Scribes*, *Phariſees*, and *Saducees*, who were the Men of greateſt Learning and Authority in the *Jewiſh* Nation, ſome of which are repreſented as very wicked Men, and notorious Hypocrites,

pocrites, and others as disbelievers of a Future State: And *among the Gentiles*, the *Magiſtrates*, *Rulers*, and *Chief of the Cities*, *Philoſophers*, *Sorcerers*, *Craftſmen for Idolatrous Shrines*, and *certain lewd Fellows of the baſer ſort*; moſt of which were ſtirred up, and moved to what they did by the *Jews* that lived among them.

This is the ſhorteſt and plaineſt account I could give of the *Subject of the New Teſtament*, or the *Matters contained* in that Book; which are ſuch as every Body that reads it will find there, and conſequently muſt ſubſcribe to the truth of the *Repreſentation*, however he may doubt of the reality of the *Original*.

The next thing to be conſidered in the *New Teſtament*, is the *Way* and *Manner* in which the ſeveral Matters before mention'd, are there related, with ſuch other circumſtances as referr to the *Form* or *Compoſition* of the whole Book, and the ſeveral parts of which it conſiſts.

Now 'tis plain to any Man that reads over the *New Teſtament* with the ſame care, attention, and impartiality, as he does another Book, that it was not all writ by *the ſame Perſon at one continued*

time, but by *ſeveral Perſons at different times*, and upon *different occaſions*; and that *in general*, 'tis writ with great *plainneſs* and *ſimplicity* of Stile, without Art or Affectation, and with many extraordinary Marks of *Sincerity* and *Truth*.

But to be more particular; the four firſt Books, called *Goſpels*, ſeem to have been Pen'd by ſo many different Authors, as appears, not only from ſeveral *Ways* and *Manners of Expreſſion* obſervable in each of them, but alſo from the *Subject*; which being the ſame in all, and moſt of the ſame *Matters of Fact* being repeated in each *Goſpel*, ſome of which are told with ſuch a diverſity of circumſtances as occaſions ſome difficulty to reconcile together, it cannot be imagined that any one Man would write ſo many accounts of the ſame Story, ſo little different from one another in the main Branches, and ſo much, in ſome leſſer particulars.

The *Narration* in *all the Hiſtorical parts* of the *New Teſtament* is very *ſhort*, *naked*, and *ſimple*, nothing but bare *Matters of Fact* being related juſt as they happen'd, without any interpoſition of the Author: There is no Preparation of Events; no artful Tranſitions or Connexions; no ſet

Characters

Characters of Persons to be introduced, or Reflections upon past Actions, and the Authors of them; no Excuses or Apologies for such things as a Writer might probably foresee would shock or disturb his Readers; no Colours, Artifices, or Arguments, to set off a doubtful Action, and reconcile it to some other, or to the Character of the Person that did it: The Faults and Infirmities of those Persons, the Authors would seem to recommend, are fairly recorded without any mitigation or abatement, and the Crimes of their Enemies barely told without any aggravation.

The *Epistles* appear to be written with a great Air of *Piety* and *Devotion*; and the Authors of them seem to be acted by as warm and steady *Zeal* for the *Glory of God*, and the *Good of Mankind*; and to speak with mighty *Assurance* from a full *Conviction* of the truth of those things they so earnestly press and recommend. Whether any of them were written by the Authors of the Historical Books, and which of them were, and which not, we have nothing in the Writings themselves to judge by, but the *difference* of *Style*, which seems very

ry diſtinguiſhable in ſome of them; but I ſhall not lay much ſtreſs upon that, becauſe it may be diſputed by Pretenders to Criticiſm.

The laſt Epiſtle which goes under the Name of the *Revelation*, is plainly of a different Character from all the other Books of the *New Teſtament*, though ſaid to be written by one who was Author of a Goſpel and ſome other Epiſtles; which difference ariſing wholly from the Matters contained in it, and the manner of their Conveyance into the Mind of the Writer, upon this ſuppoſion, it may eaſily be allowed to belong to the ſame Author that writ ſome other parts of the *New Teſtament* in a different Style from that of the *Revelation*, which is altogether *Figurative* and *Myſterious*.

All the ſeveral Books in the *New Teſtament*, excepting the *Epiſtle to the Hebrews*, have Names of Perſons prefixed to them as the *reputed Authors* of them; who are all the ſame that are mention'd in the *Goſpels* and *Acts*, either as *immediate Apoſtles of Chriſt*, or ſuch as were *choſen* and *directed* by thoſe that were ſo: But neither by the *Titles*, nor by any thing ſaid in the *Books* themſelves, does

it

it appear, that any part of the *New Teſtament* was written by *Chriſt himſelf*, or that he writ any thing at all.

I have theſe things further to obſerve of the *Books of the New Teſtament in general*; that there are in divers places of them, a great many particular remarkable *Notes of Time*, to diſtinguiſh when the ſeveral Actions therein related happened; all which are within the ſpace contained betwixt the *Death* of *Julius Cæſar*, and *the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem*: That there are a great many *Names of Perſons* and *Places* concern'd in theſe Actions, the greateſt part of which are *Jewiſh*, *Greek*, and *Roman*: And that moſt of the *chief Mattters of Fact* and *Doctrines* mention'd in any of the Books of the *New Teſtament*, are ſuppoſed by the ſeveral Writers of them, to be *known* and *believed* before thoſe Books were writ.

The two former of theſe Obſervations are very evident upon the firſt, and moſt tranſient reading of the *New Teſtament*; and a very ſmall degree of attention will ſerve to ſatisfie us of the latter.

All the *Epiſtles* are very abſurd and unintelligible without this Suppoſition; for firſt, the Arguments and Exhorta-

tions there made uſe of, with which they abound, are for the moſt part inferences from *Matters of Fact taken for granted*, and not *newly told*, as appears from the Way and Manner in which they are mention'd, the Facts being alluded to only, and imperfectly hinted at, not related with all the Circumſtances neceſſary to inform thoſe that had never heard of them before: Then the *Forms of Bleſſing* and *Salutation* we find there, and the *Titles* the Writers give themſelves, and thoſe they write to, all neceſſarily imply the ſame thing: Beſides there are ſeveral *direct Expreſſions* in many places of them, which do *formally*, and in *plain terms*, aſſert that the Perſons theſe *Epiſtles* were writ to, had been before inſtructed in all the principal Truths of the Goſpel.

'Tis plain alſo from the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, as well as the *Epiſtles*, that *Churches* and *Congregations* of Believers, are ſuppoſed to be eſtabliſhed in ſeveral parts of the World, before any of theſe Books were writ; the manner and way of their eſtabliſhment being the chief Subject of that Book called the *Acts*, as the fixing and confirming them in the

Faith

Faith, is the chief Deſign of *the Epiſtles*.

Nor is it leſs manifeſt from the *Goſpels*, that they all ſuppoſe the principal *Matters of Fact* related of *Chriſt*, and moſt of the *Doctrines* delivered by him, to have been *known* and *believed* by a great many, at the the time when theſe *Goſpels* were writ, and in the places where they were publiſhed. The manner of beginning each *Goſpel*, is a very good proof of this Truth: St. *Luke* plainly, in expreſs Words, affirms, That the Perſon for whom he more particularly writ his *Goſpel*, had been before inſtructed in thoſe things he was about to give him an account of in order, and that thoſe things which others had before him *ſet forth a Declaration of*, were ſuch as were *moſt ſurely believed among them, even as they delivered them unto them which from the beginning were Eye-witneſſes, and Miniſters of the Word:* And the *Writers of the other Goſpels* begin ſo abruptly, and fall ſo immediately into the Story of *Chriſt*, without any Introduction or Preface concerning the *Character of the Perſon* whoſe Hiſtory they writ, or the *time* or *deſign* of their writing, that it cannot be imagined they would addreſs themſelves in ſuch a manner

manner to Perſons who were perfect Strangers to the *Name* and *Hiſtory* of *Chriſt*. But, beſides this way of beginning, we have ſeveral accounts in the Body of each *Goſpel*, of multitudes of People that followed *Chriſt*, that heard his Sermons, and were Witneſſes of his Miracles; of great numbers of Believers who were converted by his Diſcourſes; and of a great many that oppoſed and proſecuted *Chriſt*, and objected ſeveral things to his *Doctrine* and *Miracles*; all which being told as happening in the life-time of *Chriſt*, moſt of the things concerning him muſt be ſuppoſed by thoſe who pretend to have written preſently after his Death (as 'tis plain all the Evangeliſts do) to be generally *known* and freſhly *remembred* at the time of their Writing; which Suppoſition further appears from the *ſhort* and diſorderly Relation of ſeveral *Matters of Fact* in *each Goſpel*; which, in ſuch caſes where we are not aſſiſted with a fuller Account from the *other Goſpels* or *following Books* of the *New Teſtament*, ſeem very obſcure to us now, who are not acquainted with the reſt of the Circumſtances omitted.

This

This is what I thought fit to remark concerning the *Subject* and *Form* of that Book which we call the *New Teſtament*. And now that *this Book* does really contain *ſuch things* as are before mention'd, and is writ in *ſuch a way* and *manner* as I have here repreſented, I think, may be taken for granted, ſince whatever has been obſerved under this head, muſt neceſſarily appear too true to any one that will read over the *New Teſtament*, and is capable of making any Judgment of a Book.

II. Suppoſing then that I have given a juſt Account and Character of the *New Teſtament*, and the ſeveral Books or Volumes it conſiſts of, I ſhall from hence advance to the main Deſign propoſed; which was to prove, *That all the principal Matters of Fact related in the New Teſtament, are really true*; that is, did really happen out at the *Times* and *Places*, and in the *Manner* they are there recorded to have happen'd. This I ſhall endeavour, in the ſecond place, to make good by a *direct Proof*, according to the diſtinction of

of the ſeveral *Facts* to be enquired into before laid down, *viz. common Hiſtorical Facts*, *Propheſies* and *Miracles*, *Divine Aſſiſtance* and *Revelation*.

I. *The firſt Step then I am to make* in the proof of what I have before aſſerted, is, to ſhew that *the common Hiſtorical Facts* mention'd in the *New Teſtament* are true. The principal of which are theſe following, *viz.* That there was ſuch a Perſon as *Jeſus Chriſt*, of ſuch a Character, who taught ſuch Doctrines, pretended to ſuch mighty Works, and was executed in ſuch a manner as is repreſented in the *New Teſtament*; That there were likewiſe certain Perſons who were Followers and Adherents of *Chriſt*, who after his Death, profeſs'd to believe the Miracles we find now recorded of him, and to do as great themſelves, who taught the ſame Doctrines he did in his life-time, and many other things which they pretended to have received from him while he was alive, and from the Spirit of God afterwards, and who made it their buſineſs to propagate the Belief and Practice of what they taught throughout

out the World, whoſe Characters and Sufferings were ſuch as are before deſcribed: That the Doctrine or Religion of *Chriſt* was accordingly propagated through all *Judea*, and moſt Parts of the *Roman Empire*; ſo that great Numbers of People every where own'd and profeſs'd it: And that all this happen'd within that compaſs of Time included between the Death of *Julius Cæſar*, and the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*.

Now theſe are ſuch remarkable, notorious Facts, have been ſo well proved by multiplicity of Evidence, and ſo little conteſted by the ſeveral Enemies of *Chriſtianity*, That I ſhall content my ſelf by giving a ſummary Proof of them, without entring upon that great Variety of particular Arguments every general Branch of Evidence contains in it: Which Proof I ſhall caſt into this Method.

Firſt, I ſhall take an Account of the *Original of Chriſtianity*; and ſhew, That this Religion muſt have came firſt into the World at the time aſſign'd for this Event in the *New Teſtament*.

Afterwards, I ſhall conſider the ſtate of Chriſtianity at another Period of Time, when

when it will certainly be allowed, that all the principal Matters of Fact that ſtand now recorded in the *New Teſtament* were generally believed.

And then I ſhall prove, That the ſame Matters of Fact were likewiſe believed at, and immediately after, the Times in which they are ſaid to happen, and ſo continually down to that particular Period fixed upon.

Which laſt Propoſition I ſhall endeavour to make out.

From the conſtant Tradition of ſuch a Belief, together with many ſenſible, infallible Effects of it.

And from many other extrinſick Signs and Monuments remaining at that Time.

From which *conſtant* and *univerſal Belief* among Chriſtians, of all the principal Facts in the *New Teſtament*, both *common* and *extraordinary*, continued down to ſuch a Period, from the very firſt Times in which they ſeverally happen'd: I conclude, That at leaſt the *common Matters of Fact*, ſuch as I have juſt before inſtanced in, muſt be true.

Firſt,

Firſt then, as to the *Original of Chriſtianity*; it is to be obſerv'd, That there is no Age of the World, no Portion of Time, ſince the beginning of Things at any great Diſtance from us, that we have a clearer, fuller, and more particular Account of, than we have of that which paſt under the Twelve firſt *Ceſars*, or Emperors of *Rome*; both Learning and Empire being then at the higheſt Pitch, and furniſhing abundance of Matter for the Pens of that and the ſucceeding Ages.

And as the Hiſtory of that time is the trueſt and beſt known of any, ſo no *Matter of Fact* could happen within that Time which was more remarkable, or could more eaſily and certainly be conveyed down to Poſterity, than the *firſt Riſe* and *Propagation of the Chriſtian Religion*. There's nothing ſo eaſy to be known of any Countrey, where we have the leaſt Remains of Hiſtory left us, as what Religion was profeſs'd there, and what conſiderable Alterations were made in it: All the Laws, Cuſtoms, and Policy of a Nation, are intermixt with their Religion; moſt of the Actions, Opinions, and Characters of particular Men, bear the Marks of it; and if we examin Things

more

more narrowly, and trace them up to their Original, we shall find that *Religion* puts a greater Distinction betwixt one Nation and another, than any difference of *Climate* can do.

But, not to pursue that Speculation any further, 'tis very plain from all History what the Religion of the *Jews* was, and what Religion they had at *Rome*, and in other Parts of the *Roman Empire*, under the Reign of *Augustus*. There were no such Persons then to be heard of as bore the Name of *Christians*; no such Religion any where professed as that which is now call'd *Christian*, the Plan and Model of which we find in the Books of the *New Testament*.

Tacitus But in the Time of *Nero* we find a great many Persons at *Rome*, call'd *Christians*, put to Death, and several other ways persecuted and tormented, for being so, by that Emperor; which Denomination, and whatever they thought themselves obliged to believe or do, upon that Account, was then generally acknowledged by themselves, and others, to be derived to them from one *Christ*, who was sometime before crucified at *Jerusalem*.

Now

Now the Time when this *Christ*, the first Author of this Sect of Men call'd *Christians*, began to publish his Doctrine to the World, is very particularly and circumstantially set down by St. *Luke*, in the Third Chapter of his Gospel, to be *the Fifteenth Year of the Reign of Tiberius Cesar, Pontius Pilate being Governor of Judea, and Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, and his Brother Philip Tetrarch of Iturea, and of the Region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the Tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the High Priests* of the Jews.

And in the Book call'd the *Acts of the Apostles*, said to be writ by the same St. *Luke*, it is affirm'd, That *the Disciples*, by which Word is there meant all those that believed in *Christ*, and embraced the Doctrines taught by him, *were called Christians first at Antioch*: Which Matter of Fact is, by the Consent of all *Christian* Historians, recorded to have happen'd at the latter end of the Reign of *Caligula*, who was the next that succeeded *Tiberius* in the Empire of *Rome*.

And that this is the lowest Point of Time it can be fix'd at, appears from the same Place of St. *Luke*, where immediately after the Words before cited, it fol-

lows, *And in theſe Days came Prophets from Jeruſalem unto Antioch, and there ſtood up one of them named Agabus, and ſignified by the Spirit, that there ſhould be great Dearth throughout all the World; which came to paſs in the Days of Claudius Ceſar.* From whence I infer, That this Relation of *Agabus*, concurring in Time with that other Account of the *Diſciples being firſt call'd Chriſtians*; and it being plain, from what is ſaid concerning the Completion of *Agabus*'s Prophecy in the Days of *Claudius Ceſar*, That he firſt utter'd his Prophecy ſome time before the Days of *Claudius Ceſar*, the Time when the Diſciples were firſt called *Chriſtians* muſt likewiſe be, ſooner or later, before the Reign of *Claudius*; which *Claudius* being the immediate Succeſſor of *Caligula* in the Empire, the Matter of Fact in queſtion muſt happen in the latter end of the Reign of *Caligula*, or at ſome time before.

Now from the Fifteenth Year of *Tiberius*, when *Chriſt firſt publiſhed his Doctrine at Jeruſalem*, to the laſt of *Caligula*, when his *Diſciples were firſt call'd Chriſtians at Antioch*, is about Twelve Years; from whence to the Tenth Year of *Nero*, when the *Chriſtians were firſt perſecuted at Rome*,

is

is a little above Twenty Years; within Five Years after which *Jerusalem was destroyed*, and an End was put to the Jewish Government and Policy. So that from the Fifteenth of *Tiberius*, when it is pretended that *Christ* first published his Gospel at *Jerusalem*, to the first of *Vespatian* when *Jerusalem* was destroy'd, is about Forty Years, and no more.

If therefore these Matters of Fact concerning the *Neronian Persecution*, and the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, are true, as is constantly attested, by *Heathen* and *Jewish*, as well as *Christian*, Writers; 'tis more than probable, that those mention'd by St. *Luke* are so too. For before the Fifteenth of *Tiberius*, no Signs or Footsteps of *Christianity* are to be found in the World, neither is it pretended by any of the Adversaries of this Religion that it was earlier; and the Destruction of *Jerusalem* falling in the First Year of *Vespatian*, the Propagation of the Christian Religion from thence to other Parts of the World, must needs have had as early a Date of that. And therefore, if we find great Numbers of *Christians* at *Rome* in *Nero*'s Time, both the *Propagation*, as well as *Original*, of the *Christian Religion*,

muſt have happen'd not only before the *Deſtruction of Jeruſalem*, but ſome time between the Fifteenth Year of *Tiberius* and the Tenth of *Nero*, and conſequently the Account before given by St. *Luke*, of theſe great Events, cannot well be imagin'd to be falſe; but 'tis certain the Miſtake in Time, if there ſhould be any ſuppoſed, cannot be conſiderable. From all which, I think I have reaſon to conclude, That the *Chriſtian Religion* was profeſs'd at *Rome* in the Time of *Nero*, and was derived from one *Chriſt*, who was the firſt Author of it, and ſuffered Death at *Jeruſalem* upon that Account, toward the latter end of *Tiberius*'s Reign, as I find it recorded by St. *Luke*, and the other Writers of the *New Teſtament*.

The next view I ſhall take of the *Chriſtian Religion* ſhall be under *Conſtantine*, another Emperor of *Rome*, who upon ſome occaſion or other was diſpoſed to embrace this Religion about 300 Years after the firſt Publication of it by *Chriſt*, at which time it is very notorious that *Chriſtianity* was the prevailing Religion in all the parts of the *Roman* Empire, the

the extent of which was then very great,

This manifeſtly appears from all the accounts we have of the Hiſtory of this famous Emperor, and the State of the World under his Reign; in the Twentieth Year of which, was held a *General Council*, which was a Meeting or Aſſembly of a great number of Biſhops, who came from all the different Provinces and Cities both of the Eaſtern and Weſtern Empire, and were Perſons that in their ſeveral Diſtricts, govern'd and directed in Religious Affairs; the chief deſign of that Meeting was by *Conſtantine*, who called them together, declared to be for the deciſion of a Controverſie, that had happen'd between certain Chriſtian Profeſſors concerning a particular Article or Doctrine of their Religion, which ſome affirm'd ought to be believed in one Senſe, and ſome in another: Theſe Biſhops did meet accordingly to the number of about 300, decided the Matter they were called about, by appointing a Form of Words for all Chriſtians to expreſs their Belief of that, and ſeveral other particulars in, which was unanimouſly approved and ſubſcribed by all but two:

Beſides which *Form of Faith* they made ſeveral *Canons* or Rules, with Relation to *Diſcipline*, which concern'd the Qualifications of ſuch Perſons as were to perform Religious Offices, or to partake of the Effects of them; their manner of Acting upon ſuch occaſions, and their Behaviour to one another upon the account of any Religious diſtinction.

But, in order to take a more particular ſurvey of the *State of the Chriſtian Religion under Conſtantine*, from the account that is given us of this Council by *Euſebius* and *Athanaſius*, who were preſent at it, and other credible Writers who lived at, or near the ſame time, I ſhall draw theſe following Obſervations and Reflections.

I. *Conſtantine* was the *firſt Roman Emperor* that profeſt the *Chriſtian Religion*. There was no King, Conſul, Dictator, Emperor, or any other, the chief Governour of the *Roman* State before him, that ever departed from the ancient Inſtitution made upon the firſt Settlement of that Commonwealth, or publickly embraced a new Religion, of a different Character from that eſtabliſhed by the Laws of *Numa*. 2. There

2. There never was before this Council, any ſuch *General Meeting* of Eminent and Learned Perſons, who were Aſſembled together from ſo many different quarters of the World, purely to ſettle ſome Controverſies in Religion.

Which two ſurpriſing Circumſtances muſt make this *Council* of *Nice*, one of the moſt remarkable Events that ever happen'd in the World.

3. The calling of this Council does plainly inferr, that *Conſtantine* look'd upon the whole *Roman* Empire to have been at that time generally *Chriſtian*: The Perſons ſummon'd, the Places from whence they came, the occaſion of their Meeting, do all prove this; For the Perſons of which the Council was compos'd, were moſt of them Governors and Teachers of large Churches and Congregations, they came out of all the greater and leſſer Provinces, and from the moſt Populous and Conſiderable Towns under the *Roman* Government; and the reaſon of their coming, was to give their Opinion concerning a particular Doctrine which did ſuppoſe an antecedent Belief of the whole Chriſtian Scheme.

4. The whole behaviour of this Council of Biſhops while they ſat together, and the buſineſs they did there, is a certain proof, not only that they were *Chriſtians*, and that the *Chriſtian Religion* was publickly and generally profeſt in the Places from whence they came; but that they all agreed in ſome *common Faith*, and that the *Chriſtian Religion* profeſs'd in the ſeveral Places from whence they came, was every where the *ſame*, without any other variation than what was grounded upon the *different Conception of ſome Articles* by particular Perſons which were allowed by all alike in ſome general Terms, or *different application of ſome general Rules* about ſuch Matters as Chriſtians were, by the whole tenour of their Religion left at liberty ſo to apply.

5. The reaſon of this general Agreement of all Chriſtians, ſeparated ſo far from one another in place, and never before this time united under one common Head or Governor, was, as we find by what paſs'd in this Council, a firm and conſtant Belief that ſuch and ſuch Books, which they all had amongſt them, were written

written by the immediate Followers and Disciples of *Christ*, and contained a true Account of his Life and Doctrine, and a full Scheme of their Religion. What ever was in any of these Books they lookt upon as Obligatory, and such they esteemed the Authority of these Writings, That they were not, upon any Account, in the least Passage of them, to receive any Addition, Diminution, or Alteration whatsoever. In the Decision of the present Controversy before them, these were appeal'd to on both Sides, and the Authority of them allowed by all; and the particular Canons they made, were founded upon the general Rules and Orders of Discipline laid down in these Scriptures.

6. As we find by what was done in this Council, concerning the Matter of Faith they came to settle, That all the Bishops there assembled were acquainted with several of the same Books of Scripture, which we now have under the Name of the *New Testament*; and that they were perswaded they were delivered down to them from the *Apostles*, as a Rule of their Faith: So, by several of the

Canons

Canons they made, we are aſſur'd, That, in all the ſeveral Places from whence they were aſſembled, the Cuſtoms of *Baptiſm* and the *Communion* were univerſally and conſtantly uſed; That the *Firſt Day of the Week* was obſerved as a Day ſet a-part for Religious Services, which were chiefly *Prayers*, and *Reading the Scriptures*; That there were a great many Men, in a *particular Way and Manner appointed for the Performance of Religious Offices*, in the Name and Preſence of the People; And that ſome of theſe did, in a more eminent Degree, *preſide over all other*, both Religious Officers and common Chriſtians, in ſuch a Diſtrict, under the Title and Style of *Biſhops*.

Now the Truth of this Relation concerning the *Council of Nice*, and the State of the Chriſtian Religion at that Time being ſuppoſed; in the next Place I ſhall undertake to prove, That the *Chriſtians* we find in *Nero*'s Time, were of *the ſame Faith* and *Religion* with thoſe that lived *under the Reign of Conſtantine*; and, conſequently, That *all the principal Matters of Fact now recorded in the New Teſtament*, were generally believed at, and immediately

diately after, the Times in which they are ſaid to happen, and ſo continually down to the *Council of Nice.*

This I ſhall endeavour to make out; Firſt, From the conſtant *Tradition* of ſuch a Belief, together with many ſenſible and infallible Effects of it.

From the *Neronian Perſecution* to the *Council of Nice* is about 260 Years; which is ſo ſhort a Period, That 'tis hardly poſſible to imagine the *Tradition* of ſo important a Fact, as the *general Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion*, in any conſiderable Country or Nation, ſhould, in the main Branches and Subſtance of it, be defective or corrupted within that Time; though there were no other remaining Monuments of it, but what were obvious to every Man's own Obſervation at the Meeting of this Famous Council. And therefore ſince the Chriſtians of this latter Period did look upon it as a certain Truth delivered down to them, That the Chriſtians who lived in *Nero*'s Time profeſſed the ſame Faith they did, as 'tis plain from the Account before given of their Religion they muſt, we may very well conclude, That the Matter

of

of Fact was really ſo without further Proof.

But to remove all Doubts and Objections ſo general a Concluſion as this may be apt to create, the Truth and Credibility of the *Tradition* ſhall be more clearly made ont in the following Manner.

Several of thoſe who were preſent at the *Council of Nice* might, of their own certain knowledge, be fully ſatisfied, That, for *Fifty Year backward*, the *Chriſtian Religion* had been the *ſame* it was *then*, in the Countries from whence they came; That all this Time they had had the *ſame Scriptures* among them; That theſe Scriptures had *conſtantly* been *read*, both in *publick* and *private*; and (as far as fell within humane Cognizance) *as conſtantly*, and *in the ſame manner believed and eſteemed*, as they appeared *then* to be; That the Ceremonies of *Baptizing* and *Communicating* had been *always univerſally* uſed, at *ſuch Times*, and upon *ſuch* and *ſuch Occaſions*; That theſe, and ſeveral other Religious Performances, as *Reading the Scriptures*, *Prayers*, *Exhortations*, &c. had been *conſtantly* practiſed in *publick*, when Chriſtians were aſſembled together;

ther; That *Meetings*, or *Aſſemblies*, for theſe Purpoſes were *very frequent*; That, beſides other occaſional Times, they always obſerved *the Firſt Day of the Week*, as a Portion of Time which they thought themſelves obliged to ſet a-part for the Performance of Religious Duties, and eſpecially in Publick; That there were a *conſtant Succeſſion of Men*, by certain Ceremonies peculiarly *appropriated* to the Diſcharge of ſome *Religious Offices*, which they did not think it Lawful for others, not ſo diſtinguiſhed, to be concern'd in; That it was the particular Buſineſs of theſe Men to *teach* and *inſtruct* the reſt in the Knowledge of the *Chriſtian Religion*, and *exhort* them to a ſteady and exact Submiſſion to the Rules of it; That there were ſome of theſe ſtyled *Biſhops*, who were by ſome *different Marks* of *Diſtinction* known from the reſt of their Brethren, and *preſided* over all Chriſtians, both Clergy and Laity, in ſuch a Diſtrict, *governing* and *directing* them all in Religious Affairs, and *exerciſing* certain *Spiritual Powers* of an *extraordinary future* Influence, in order to the *preſerving* and *inforcing the Belief and Practice* of the *Chriſtian Religion*. Such *Cuſtoms* and *Actions* as theſe,

in

in all which every Biſhop muſt himſelf have bore a Share, muſt needs be infallibly known to thoſe Biſhops aſſembled at *Nice*, who were of Age enough to remember for ſo long together as Fifty Years, which may eaſily be ſuppoſed of ſeveral of them: And it may, with as much reaſon, be allowed, That theſe very Biſhops might have, Fifty Years before their Meeting at *Nice*, convers'd with thoſe who could have as diſtinctly remembred what was done for Fifty Years further backward, as they could remember what had happen'd ſince the Time we ſuppoſed they convers'd with them; from whom they might have been certainly inform'd, That all the foremention'd Matters of Fact had continued the ſame, for *Fifty Years before* they could have an *immediate Knowledge* of them themſelves. And moreover, thoſe who gave them this Information could have aſſured them, That they never ſaw, or heard of any Body, that lived ſince their Time, who knew it otherwiſe; and this, with the ſame Allowance as in the former Caſe, will carry the Thing *Fifty Years higher* ſtill.

And

And ſo far, I think, however uncertain *Tradition* is juſtly accounted in the Conveyance of *Doctrines* and *Opinions*, the *Tradition* of *ſuch notorious* Matters of Fact as theſe, ſo *eaſily obſerved*, ſo *conſtantly preſent*, ſo *general*, and *ſo concerning*, may be fully relied upon.

To make this plainer, by a like Inſtance in our Country, juſt about 150 Years ago, *Edward the Sixth* is reported to have been *King* of *England*; and the ſame Hiſtory which tells us ſo, (which I will ſuppoſe to be but juſt now written) acquaints us, That, in his Time, the *Chriſtian Religion* was *generally profeſſed* through all this Nation, and much after *the ſame manner* it is now: But, particularly, that the *ſame Scriptures* were acknowledg'd, and the *ſame Religious Cuſtoms* and *Uſages* obtained, which are before mention'd in the other Caſe, viz. *Baptiſm* and *Communion*, *Obſervation of the Lord's Day*, *Miniſtration of Prieſts*, *Government of Biſhops*, &c. juſt as they are *at this preſent*. The Truth of all which we might be very well aſſured of, if there were no Hiſtory, or other Monuments, of what was done in the Reign of King *Edward the Sixth* extant, down from his Time to this; becauſe,

cauſe, by the former Suppoſition, there have been a great many Perſons, who, during the Courſe of their Lives, computed at no uncommon length, might have convers'd with thoſe who liv'd in King *Edward the Sixth*'s Time, and alſo with thoſe who are *now Living*; and at ſuch Ages of their ſeveral Lives, in which they may well be ſuppos'd capable of remembring and judging of what they ſaw and heard: From which *intermediate* Perſons, ſo many as are now Living, and convers'd with them, (which, I believe, are a great many) may have had ſuch certain Information of the ſtate of Religion in this Nation, during the Reign of that King, that they cannot poſſibly call in queſtion. And if all theſe agree in their ſeveral Reports, without concerting with one another, the Evidence of the ſame Matters of Fact they thus agree in will be as ſtrong, with reſpect to us who enquire theſe Things of them, and much ſtronger than to any of them themſelves in particular, who have not made the ſame Obſervations concerning the Agreement of others before them.

'Twould

'Twould be no unreaſonable Suppoſition to imagine, That there are ſome now Living, who have immediately convers'd with thoſe who lived in *Edward* the *Sixth*'s Time; but theſe are ſo *few*, and of ſo *unuſual an Age*, that I ſhall not inſiſt upon a Proof that might be made that way: But the other Caſe I have mention'd is eaſy and common, and lies open to every Body without a particular Computation of Time.

Upon which I ſhall further obſerve, That thoſe, whoſe Teſtimony is allow'd ſufficient for the *Form* and *Kind* of *Religion* profeſſed in *England*, under *Edward the Sixth*, are, ſo far as that Period reaches, as good and capable Witneſſes of the *Condition of its Being*, with reſpect either to its *Original then*, or any *conſiderable Alterations* or *Intermiſſions* in it *at any time ſince*. Whether the *Chriſtian Religion* was *firſt introduced* into this Country by *Edward the Sixth*, or any Body elſe in his Time, all the Inhabitants of it having immediately before been *Jews*, *Heathens*, or *Mahometans*; or whether it had been *receiv'd* and *profeſſed* here, *before* he came to the Throne, muſt have been *equally known*, and *in like manner conveyed down*, by thoſe

from whom we derive the *other* Matters of Fact with which *this* is ſuppoſed *cotemporary?* And if any *conſiderable Changes* in the *main Branches*, or *general* and *publick Uſages* of it, ſuch as are before inſtanced in; or any *Interminſſions*, either of the *whole Profeſſion*, or of *ſome of thoſe publick Cuſtoms* and *Manners of Worſhip* or *Diſcipline*, ſhould have happen'd *at any Time ſince*, theſe being more remarkable Facts than the *uninterrupted Continuance of the ſame ſtate and form of Religion*, and falling later than the firſt Date of what we allow to be diſtinctly known and remembred, muſt be granted to be as eaſily and ſurely delivered down to us, as thoſe Things which are acknowledg'd to fall earlier, and yet came ſafe to our Hands.

Now to apply all this to the former Caſe: Theſe Biſhops in the *Council of Nice*, who came from ſuch or ſuch a particular Province of the *Roman Empire*, might be as fully aſſured, That the *Chriſtian Religion* was *profeſſed* 150 Years before in that Province, *in the ſame Manner*, founded upon the *ſame Scriptures*, and attended with the *ſame Cuſtoms*, as it was at the Time of their aſſembling at *Nice*; as we of this Country can be aſſur'd,

That

That *our Religion, Scriptures, and Religious Cuſtoms* are the *ſame now*, that they were *in the Reign of Edward the Sixth, King of England.*

What *particular Chriſtian Cuſtoms*, I mean, in both Inſtances has been ſufficiently expreſſed already; but what *thoſe Scriptures* were, which I ſuppoſe the *Nicene Biſhops* unanimouſly acknowledg'd for the *Word of God*, and *Rule of their Faith*, and believed to have been written by the *Firſt Apoſtles* and *Diſciples* of *Chriſt*, and conſequently to have been the ſame 150 *Years before* they met in Council as they were *then*, has not yet been declared, and, by what was done in the Council, does not certainly appear: But, I think, there is no manner of Reaſon to doubt, but they were the very ſame which now go under the Name of *the New Teſtament*. For whether the *Council of Laodicea*, which was the firſt that made any Canon concerning the Books of Scripture, was before this *Council of Nice*, as ſome imagine, or about Forty Years after, as others more probably conclude, we have Arguments and Authorities enough to convince us, That *all the Books of the New Teſtament* were acknowledg'd by the

greateſt part of the *Nicene* Fathers, and *moſt of them* by *all.*

'Tis plain, from all the publick Deciſions and Orders of the Council, That they are grounded upon ſome or other of the Books of Scripture now in our Hands, if they may be ſuppoſed to have been written before that Time: And that they were *Euſebius*, one of the Biſhops of this Council, is a ſufficient Witneſs; who, in a Hiſtory he has left us, gives us an Account of the *Time* when they were all writ, and the *Authors* they were writ by; which is another very good Argument, That moſt of the *Nicene* Biſhops had the ſame Bible: For *Euſebius* being not only preſent amongſt, and converſing with ſeveral of them, but having a great Share in the Management of the Controverſy they came to *decide*, and being of a doubtful Faith in the main Point determined by them; or, as ſome ſuſpect, a Favourer of the Side condemned, muſt have had occaſion either in publick Debate, or private Converſation, to have cited moſt of the Books he acknowledg'd for *Scripture*; and had any doubt ariſen concerning the Authority of them, ſuch a conſiderable and important

tant Controverſy as would have ſprung from thence, would have produced a Determination of the Council upon it; or, to be ſure, have been as much taken Notice of, and as faithfully Recorded, as any Thing elſe that was done there.

Beſides, 'tis plain from the Hiſtory we have of this Council, by Cotemporaries, and others of the Age immediately following, That *ſome Scriptures* were appeal'd to, their Authority acknowledg'd, Forms of Expreſſion drawn from thence, a Difficulty made of departing from *Scripture-Terms* till other equivalent Expreſſions were found neceſſary, to diſtinguiſh thoſe who believ'd Scripture in a right Sence, from thoſe who interpreted it wrong. And therefore, if *Euſebius*, or *Athanaſius*, who were preſent at the Council, or any other Writer cotemporary, or near in Time to it, ſays any Thing of this Nature, he muſt be judg'd to mean, That the *ſame Scriptures* were acknowledg'd by the *Nicene Council*, which *he himſelf* owns: So that if *Euſebius*, or *Athanaſius*, own'd *all the Books of the New Teſtament* which *we* do, 'tis manifeſt, That when he talks of the *Scriptures*, in the Account he gives of the

Nicene Council, he muſt mean the ſame that he does when he mentions them upon any other Occaſion. And the like will hold of other Writers.

But further, to put this Matter paſt all doubt, 'tis certain, That the *Canon of Scripture* was ſome time or other afterwards fixed, as we find it now, with all the ſame Books in the *New Teſtament* that we have at preſent. The Occaſion of making ſuch a Canon was, becauſe it was doubted of ſome of the Books, Whether they were the genuine Works of thoſe whoſe Names they bore; and, if they were not, Whether they were of equal Authority with the reſt. Now the way that was taken to remove all Objections, and fix the Authority of thoſe *Scriptures* which were to be the *unalterable Standard* of the *Chriſtian Religion*, was, by examining the *general Tradition* of all the different Churches where Chriſtianity was profeſſed; upon which Examination, when it was certainly known, That ſuch and ſuch Books, which were doubted of by ſome, becauſe they had been but lately received among the Chriſtians of thoſe Provinces and Churches to which they belong'd, had been conſtantly acknowledg'd

knowledg'd under the ſame Style and Character with the reſt, by the Generality of the other Churches of Chriſtians; theſe were likewiſe as univerſally receiv'd as the other, and their Authority in the ſame manner allow'd. The Conſent of ſo many different Churches in the ſame Opinion concerning certain Books, and, agreeably to their Opinion, in the ſame careful Preſervation of them unalter'd, moſt of which Churches had continued ſeparate, and independent one of another, ever ſince the Date they aſcribed to thoſe Writings, and ſeveral of them at ſuch a Diſtance as to have had no communication with one another ſince that Time; ſuch a Conſent, I ſay, as this, whenſoever the *Canon of Scripture* was *firſt determined* in a *general Meeting*, was thought ſufficient to eſtabliſh the Authority of any Book that was doubted of, and accordingly the whole Canon we now have, was afterwards univerſally acknowledg'd.

Since therefore we find, That *all the Scriptures of the New Teſtament* were univerſally received ſome time after the *Nicene Council*; and, ſince the Eſtabliſhment of the Canon, and univerſal Submiſſion

to it, were founded upon a *general Tradition*, ſo faithfully preſerved in the far greateſt part of Chriſtian Churches, that all other Chriſtians were fully ſatisfied of it: From hence it follows, That the *greateſt part of the Nicene Biſhops* muſt own the ſame Scriptures *we* do now, becauſe the *greateſt part of the Churches* from whence they came did.

But, not to inſiſt upon this, we will conſider only *thoſe Scriptures* which were *never doubted of* by any Chriſtians, and conſequently muſt have been received by the *whole Council of Nice*. Theſe were, according to *Euſebius*, who in his Hiſtory gives us a Catalogue of them, *the Four Goſpels*, *Acts of the Apoſtles*, *the Thirteen Epiſtles of St. Paul*, which have his Name to them, *the Firſt Epiſtle of Peter*, and *the Firſt Epiſtle of John*. And *Euſebius* could not ſay this, had he known of any of his Fellow-Biſhops of the Council, who denied either the *Authority* or *general Reception* of any of theſe Books.

Suppoſing therefore, That theſe were the only Scriptures acknowledg'd by all the *Nicene* Biſhops; then what was ſaid before, concerning ſeveral *Religious Cuſtoms*

ſtoms and *Practices* there mention'd, will hold in like manner of *thoſe Books of Scripture*; and ſuch or ſuch a particulat Biſhop, that was preſent at this Council, might himſelf, by a ſhort, eaſy, and unqueſtionable way of conveyance, be aſſured, That for 150 Years laſt paſt, the *ſame Scriptures* had been acknowledg'd, as well as the *ſame Religious Cuſtoms* practiſed in that Church and Province from whence he came, and conſequently, That the *main Scheme of Chriſtian Doctrine*, and the *publick Profeſſion* of it, had been all that Time the ſame.

Now if we apply the foregoing Obſervations to *all* the ſeveral Biſhops of this Council, and ſuppoſe them all ſatisfied of the conſtant *Tradition* of the ſame *Scriptures* & *Cuſtoms* as are before ſpecified, in the ſeveral Churches and Provinces from whence they came, as the Hiſtory of theſe Times relates the *Matter of Fact* to have been; then is the unanimous conſent of all theſe Biſhops an infallible Argument of the truth of what they teſtifie.

And, if there had not been ſuch a conſtant Tradition in any of theſe Churches or Provinces as we ſuppoſe, then the

Original

Original Introduction, or *Intermiſſion* of any of thoſe *Scriptures* or *Cuſtoms* within the ſame compaſs of Time, would have been in the *ſame Way and Manner*, and with the *ſame Certainty* known to the Biſhops of thoſe Churches and Provinces, where ſuch Introduction, or Intermiſſion happen'd; and, what was firſt introduced among them, might as eaſily and ſurely have been traced to the Country or Province from whence it was derived to them, and the Manner and Occaſion of the Conveyance as certainly remembred, as the continued Tradition of the ſame State of things could have been; and, then the enquiry may be made in thoſe Churches aud Provinces which did not derive their Religion from any other, within the time before ſet of 150 Years; and ſo far the Argument from *Tradition* will moſt undoubtedly hold according to the former Suppoſition laid down.

But, however this be, whether we ſuppoſe that *all* the Countrys and Provinces from whence the *Nicene Biſhops* came, had profeſs'd the Chriſtian Religion *for* 150 *Years before* this Council met, or that *ſome of them* had *received it later*; the *Tradition* concerning the *continued Uniformi-*

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ty of the *Scriptures* and *Religious Cuſtoms* which I have before given an account of is equally to be relied on for that whole ſpace of Time; for, the *Tradition* of any thing being preſerved by a *Succeſſion of Men*, and not a *conſtancy of Place*, There was no Perſon at this Council, but was capable of informing himſelf with great certainty, that the *Chriſtian Religion* had been in the World, and the *ſame Scriptures* and *Religious Cuſtoms* they then had in the Church he belonged to had been in like manner, conſtantly own'd and receiv'd by thoſe that profeſs'd the *Chriſtian Religion* for 150 Years before that time, either in the Country he himſelf was then of, or in ſome other from whence that *Religion*, and thoſe *Scriptures* and *Cuſtoms* were derived to them. The Succeſſion of the Perſons conveying ſuch a Tradition is ſo very ſhort, that no change of Place is ſufficient to diſturb or interrupt the Conveyance, and therefore, no Perſon that gave himſelf the trouble of a faithful Enquiry, could be miſtaken in it; and it muſt be allowed to have been the concern of all to enquire; and, ſince 'tis plain that all the Biſhops did acknowledge theſe things

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to be of greater Antiquity, and of uninterrupted continuance, as all pretences to the Chriſtian Religion do neceſſarily inferr; it muſt alſo be ſuppoſed that ſeveral of them had taken particular care to ſatisfie themſelves of the truth of theſe Matters, and that none of them had met with any contrary accounts that ſhock'd their Faith.

Thus does it manifeſtly appear from the certainty of *bare Tradition* only, without the aſſiſtance of any *concurrent Monuments* of a more fix'd and laſting ſignification to ſtrengthen it, that *for* 150 *Years before the Council* of *Nice*, the *Chriſtian Religion* was in the *main Foundation* and *Subſtance*, and in the *principal Inſtitutions* of it, the *ſame* it was *then*, whereſoever it was profeſs'd at either of theſe times: And, by accounts written about this latter Period, by Perſons that were preſent at the Council then Aſſembled, who could be ſure of the Tradition themſelves in ſome Countrys, and could receive the like Information from the other Biſhops Aſſembled with them, as to the Places they came from, it is likewiſe certain that in moſt, if not all the Provinces and Cities, any of the

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Nicene Biſhops belong'd to, *the Chriſtian Religion* had been eſtabliſhed 150 Years before the Meeting of that Council, and in the ſame manner profeſs'd during that whole Term.

Taking it therefore for granted, that *the Chriſtian Religion* was by large numbers of Men profeſs'd in the greateſt part of the *Roman Empire* 150 Years before the Council of *Nice*, in the ſame manner it was at the Meeting of that Council; this Agreement of ſo many ſeveral diſtinct Countries in the *ſame Religion*, neceſſarily proves that that Religion muſt have been derived to them all from ſome *common Original*; and, ſince, as has before been obſerved, the Chief Governor of all theſe Provinces and Countries, was always, till the Perſon that then Reigned, of a Religion oppoſite to that which was then profeſs'd by ſo many of his Subjects, and conſequently cannot be ſuppoſed by any Decree or Law of his, to have introduced this into all his Dominions at once; it evidently follows from hence, that *this Religion* muſt have been publiſhed and entertain'd in ſome one Countrey or Province firſt, before it was heard of in any of the other; and in ſome

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particular Town or City of that Province, except we ſuppoſe a great many firſt Inventors concerting a Scheme and agreeing to publiſh it all at the ſame time, in ſeveral Countries, or ſeveral parts of the ſame Country, which is a very unlikely Suppoſition, will hardly be objected here, and, if it was, would do the Objectors little ſervice, as might eaſily be proved if there was occaſion.

Whatever Country then we ſuppoſe the Chriſtian Religion firſt publiſhed in, we muſt allow ſome time for its ſpreading through that Country, and being afterwards propagated and fix'd in ſo many other Nations of different *Manners*, *Tempers* and *Languages* as the ſeveral Provinces of the *Roman Empire* were, in which *the Chriſtian Religion* was 150 Years before the Council of *Nice* eſtabliſhed, and flouriſhed, notwithſtanding all the oppoſition a *New Religion* unſupported by *Civil Power* muſt meet with.

Now if we allow about Threeſcore Years for all this, and according to the natural progreſs of Things, 'tis incredible the *Chriſtian Religion* ſhould from any one City or Province of the *Roman Empire*, in *ſo ſhort a time*, be diffuſed *ſo far*,

far, be embraced by *ſo many*, and be eſtabliſhed *ſo fare*, under all the diſavantages that ſuch a Religion muſt be attended with; yet, allowing but Threeſcore Years or thereabouts for ſo wonderful an Event, this added to the 150 before accounted for, brings us to the time of *Trajan*. We are ſure therefore, that the Chriſtian Religion could not have a later Original than under the Reign of *Trajan*: But 'tis plain from an Eminent Miniſter of his Court, that there were then vaſt numbers of Chriſtians in the *Roman Empire*, and in Provinces very remote from *Rome*, as well as within the diſtrict of *Rome* it ſelf, and the account he gives of that Religion, manifeſtly ſhews that it was *ſo far the ſame* with what was found in the *Scriptures*, and profeſs'd by all Chriſtians at the time of the *Council* of *Nice*. *Pliny.*

Since therefore, as has before been proved, the Chriſtian Religion was the ſame 150 *Years before the Council* of *Nice* as it was *then*; ſince in ſome of thoſe very Provinces and Cities of the *Roman Empire*, where *the ſame Chriſtian Religion* was profeſs'd 150 Years before the Council

Council of *Nice*, we find that the *Chriſtian Religion* was likewiſe profeſs'd; and there were great numbers of *Chriſtians* about *Threeſcore Years before* that time, *under the Reign* of *Trajan*; and the account we have of theſe Chriſtians and their Religion by Heathen Authors, agrees exactly with the Character of the Chriſtian Religion which not long afterwards, we find, generally maintain'd, then it follows from hence, that in *thoſe particular Places*, the Religion was the ſame in *the time* of *Trajan*, it was *Threeſcore Years afterwards*; and conſequently, that being but 150 Years before the Council of *Nice*, the ſame it was *then:* And, if the Chriſtian Religion was as far ſpread in the time of *Trajan*, as it was Sixty Years afterwards, the ſame will hold as to *all the Roman Empire*; and, if it was not, it muſt be derived to thoſe Provinces that wanted it, from thoſe where it was profeſs'd, which amounts to the ſame thing; for, if the Chriſtian Religion *in the time* of *Trajan* was not the ſame it was *Sixty Years afterwards*; no account can be given of ſo general and wide an Agreement *then* in ſo many different Provinces, as has already been prov'd

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the ſame *Chriſtian Religion* was profeſs'd in at that time, in all which, the Religion *then* profeſs'd, muſt be ſuppoſed different from the Original it was derived from *Sixty Years before*, even in thoſe very Provinces, where it had been ſo long ago eſtabliſhed, as well as in thoſe where it was later entertain'd, which is abſurd to imagine.

And further, ſince by the account we have of theſe Times, it plainly appears, that the Chriſtian Religion was very far ſpread *under the Reign* of *Trajan*, and conſequently publiſhed long before; and ſince as far as it was *then* ſpread, it was the ſame it was *Sixty Years afterwards*, when, as we have already proved, the greateſt part of the *Roman Empire* agreed in the *ſame general Form* or *Scheme of Religion* which was profeſs'd at *the Council* of *Nice*, and in the *ſame Religious Inſtitutions* and *Practices* as were *then* in uſe; it follows from hence, and from what has been before advanced, that the *Chriſtians* we find in *Nero*'s *Time*, were of the *ſame Religion* and *Faith* with thoſe that lived *at the time of the Council* of *Nice*; and conſequently, that all the *common Hiſtorical Matters of Fact* mention'd in

the New Teſtament, reſpecting *the Original of the Chriſtian Religion*, the *Place* where it firſt appeared, the *Time* and *Manner* of *Publiſhing* and *Propagating* it, the *Characters* of thoſe concern'd in the Work, and the *Fortune* that attended both them and their Doctrine, muſt neceſſarily be true, as I ſhall endeavour to ſhew more particularly by ſumming up the whole Argument in this manner.

It has been proved before, That the *generality of Chriſtians* at *the time of the Council* of *Nice*, acknowledg'd *all the* ſame *Scriptures* that *we do* now, and that *moſt of the Books* of the *New Teſtament* were *univerſally received then*, and *believed* by all Chriſtians of that Time, to have been ſo *from their firſt appearance in the World.* The Books which were thus univerſally received, were as univerſally thought to have been *written* by *thoſe Authors* to whom they are aſcribed, and to have been all written by their ſeveral Authors, at ſeveral times, *between the end of* Caligula's *Reign* and *the beginning of Trajan*'s. And indeed, if they believ'd the *Scripture-Hiſtory*, as 'tis plain the Chriſtians, who received theſe Books, did, they muſt have

have believed likewiſe, that all the Books of the *New Teſtament*, being written by ſuch Authors whoſe Names they bear, were writ within the compaſs of Time aſſigned for them; for from the Time and Manner of the Publication of the Chriſtian Religion, it appears that they could not have been any of them written ſooner; and from the Age of the Authors, it is plain that they could not have been Works of a later Date.

This being the *general Faith of all Chriſtians* at the *Time of the Council* of *Nice*, muſt likewiſe, according to what has been already proved, the univerſal Belief of Chriſtians 150 *Years before* this Council ſat; and if the *ſame Scriptures* were in the *ſame Manner* received and acknowledg'd, in the greateſt part of the *Roman Empire*, 150 Years before this Council of *Nice*, they muſt have been generally known and received *in the Time* of *Trajan*, as far as the Chriſtian Name then reach'd, they could not otherwiſe have been propagated ſo far and wide in leſs than Threeſcore Years time; And if the Chriſtians in *Trajan*'s Time knew and believ'd *theſe Scriptures*, then was the *Chriſtian Religion* under *Trajan* the ſame it was under *Nero*: For in every Book of the *New*

Teſtament the Author plainly ſuppoſes the Chriſtian Religion eſtabliſhed, and all the principal Matters of Fact, and Doctrines there recorded, believed before he wrote; and therefore, if all or any of theſe Books were received at *Rome* in the Time of *Trajan* (as the *Epiſtle to the Romans* muſt have been when Sixty Years afterwards it was believed by the greateſt part of the *Roman Empire* to have been ſent to them) then does it follow that all the Chriſtians that received them muſt have certainly known that they believed the ſame Facts and Doctrines which they found in thoſe Books ever ſince they profeſs'd the *Chriſtian Religion*; and that all others who were of the ſame Name, muſt have profeſs'd to believe the ſame things too, (the Nature of that Religion ſo requiring) and conſequently, that the Chriſtian Religion at *Rome* was the ſame in the *Time* of *Nero* it was then, the *Neronian Perſecution* being not above Thirty five Years before the *Reign* of *Trajan*; which is ſo ſhort a Period, that ſeveral Chriſtians of *Trajan*'s *Time*, might have been Chriſtians under *Nero* too, and muſt have known whether Chriſtianity *then Preach'd* to them, was the

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ſame with what they found *written*, ſuppoſing they were converted before they had ſeen any of the Books of the *New Teſtament*; and if they were not, they might as eaſily have inform'd themſelves, whether that part of the Chriſtian Hiſtory they found in theſe Books reſpecting *Rome*, and particularly *Nero*'s Time were true or not: And their Converſion to Chriſtianity by the means of theſe Books neceſſarily proves them ſatisfied of the truth of the Relations there given.

Now if *moſt of the Books of the New Teſtament* were received in *Trajan*'s *Time*, and if *Chriſtianity* was the ſame under *Nero* as under *Trajan*, and the *ſame Preach'd* as *Written*, then does it neceſſarily follow, not only that theſe Books were written by thoſe Authors whoſe Names they bear, ſome time between the Death of *Tiberius*, and beginning of *Trajan*'s Reign; but that all the *common Hiſtorical Facts* mention'd in the *New Teſtament*, and which I have undertaken to prove under this Head, are certainly true; otherwiſe they could not have been ſo generally and firmly believed, ſo near the Time they are there reported

to have happen'd in. For the Chriſtians that lived in *Trajan*'s *Time*, and received *theſe Books* as written by *ſuch Authors*, muſt conſequently believe that the *firſt Promulgation of the Goſpel* or *Chriſtian Religion* by *Jeſus Chriſt*, happen'd but Seventy Years before, and that during that ſpace it was *Preach'd* throughout the *Roman Empire*, by *ſuch Perſons*, and *in ſuch a Manner*, as is *there* related; that it was *embraced* by *great numbers* of People in *all the conſiderable Provinces*, and *Cities* of it, *eſtabliſhed* by the *Union of large Societies* and *Congregations* under the *ſame common Form of Diſcipline*, and *Witneſs'd* and *Confirm'd* by the *various Sufferings* of the firſt Teachers, and multitudes of their Diſciples; and the Chriſtians that lived in *Nero*'s Time, muſt have believed moſt of this to have happen'd in half that ſpace.

Thus by the help of *meer Tradition only*, does it plainly appear, that the *Chriſtian Religion* was the *ſame* at the *Time of the Council* of *Nice*, as it was when it was *firſt Publiſh'd* and *Preach'd* to the World; and conſequently, that *all the principal Matters of Fact* in the *New Teſtament*, ſuch as I have before given an account

account of, were all along *believed* by thoſe who Styled themſelves *Chriſtians*; and therefore *all thoſe common Hiſtorical Facts*, the certainty of which 'twas my preſent buſineſs to ſhew, muſt be *true*.

All the *Authority* I have made uſe of to ſtrengthen this *Tradition*, is the Teſtimony of ſome *Heathen Authors* of unqueſtionable Credit for the proof of this one point only, that there were a great many Perſons Styled *Chriſtians*, who were perſecuted for what they *believed* and *did as ſuch*, at *Rome*, by *Nero*, and in other remote Provinces of the *Roman Empire* by *Trajan*: Which two *Matters of Fact* happening at ſuch particular diſtances from the ſuppoſed Original of the Chriſtian Religion, I choſe to mention rather for the better *Illuſtration* of the Matter I was to prove, than for any diſtinct *proof* of it. For, taking it for granted that the *Matters of Fact* concerning the *Council* of *Nice*, and the *State of the Chriſtian Religion* at that time, were ſuch as I have repreſented; and, allowing further, what, I think, I have proved, that the *Chriſtian Religion* was *profeſſed* in *moſt*, if not *all the ſame Places* from whence the *Nicene* Biſhops came,

and in *the ſame manner*, as to the *Belief of the Scriptures*, and *uſe* of *thoſe Religious Cuſtoms* and *Inſtitutions* I have before inſtanced in, 150 *Years before* as it was *then*, it follows from hence, that, without the help of any *particular Teſtimony* of Heathen or other Writers, or any *other Ancient Monuments of Hiſtory*, that *all thoſe common Matters of Fact* which I have mention'd at the beginning of this Head, muſt needs be *true*. For, according to this Suppoſition, *the greateſt part of the Roman Empire*, believing the Books of the *New Teſtament* 150 Years before the Council of *Nice*, muſt conſequently believe that in leſs than 150 Years before that Time, the Chriſtian Religion was *firſt publiſhed* to the World at *Jeruſalem*, there being no ſuch Thing as a *Chriſtian* before; and that, within that ſpace of Time down from the firſt Publication of the Goſpel to their preſent Belief of it, it muſt have been *Preached* and *Propagated* through the greateſt part of the known World, in the Way and Manner recorded in the Books of the *New Teſtament*, and that the ſame Perſons who Preach'd it were the Authors of *thoſe Books*; Copies of which had been diſ-

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pers'd ſo far, and multiplied to ſo great great a variety, that moſt of the People that profeſs'd the Chriſtian Religion in every Country, had them in their Hands; which *Matters of Fact*, and other Particulars depending upon them, if they had not been true, could never have been ſo generally believed at a Time ſo near that in which they were ſuppoſed to happen, that the firſt and remoteſt of all, was not 150 Years paſt, and the others muſt fall out much later.

But further, beſides this proof that I have brought from *Tradition*, there are a great many other *concurrent Authorities* which do not only *confirm* the Certainty of the *Tradition*, but are of *themſelves* a *diſtinct* and *ſufficient Evidence* of the ſame Truths which we have already proved that way. For, at the ſame Period of Time wherein we have choſen to conſider the State of the Chriſtian Religion, and from whence we have traced it up to its firſt Original, and ſhewed the Conſtancy and Integrity of the Conveyance, *viz. At the Meeting of the firſt General Council of Nice*, we find a great many

many *fixt* and *ſtanding Monuments* of *ſeveral Ages* and *different Places*, that every body might have recourſe to, and examin when they pleaſed; all which did very exactly and fully prove the *Antiquity* and *uninterrupted continuance of the Chriſtian Faith*, as to all the *principal Matters of Fact* related in the *New Teſtament*.

Euſebius, one of the Biſhops of the *Nicene Council*, before mention'd, has writ a Hiſtory of the *Chriſtian Religion* from its firſt appearance in the World down to his own Time, and the Book is now extant, warranted to be his by the Teſtimony of abundance of ſucceeding Writers, and queſtion'd by none. Now in this Hiſtory he gives us a very large and particular account of the *State and Condition of Chriſtianity* in all the ſeveral Places of the World, wherever he could learn it had been entertain'd: which Account conſiſts of a vaſt variety of Matters of Fact, beſide thoſe already inſtanced, in as preſerved by *Tradition*, the Memory of moſt of which, was not only preſerved the *ſame way*, but was further ſecured by *laſting Monuments* and *Records*.

The moſt remarkable Matters in him, which I think ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe

purpose to mention for the further Confirmation of those Truths I have already proved, may be referred to these three Heads, *Customs* and *Usages*; *Relicks*, *Buildings*, and *other such like Monuments*; *Books* and *written Words*.

And first it is to be observed that, *at the time of the Council of Nice*, besides *those Religious Customs* and *Institutions* before instanced in, which were *general* and *constant* in *all Ages* and *Countries* since the first Original of Christianity, there were several *other Customs* and *Usages* then Practised; some of which obtained *as generally* as the former did, and others were confined to some *particular Places:* such were the *Annual Feasts of Christmas*, *Easter*, and *Pentecost*; *stated times of the Year and Week for Fasting*; *Anniversary Commemoration of the Sufferings of Martyrs*, and *often Meeting at the Places where they Suffered*; *using the Sign of the Cross* upon several occasions; *calling Children by the Names of the first Apostles and Saints*, &c. These, and many other such like Customs as these, are plainly founded upon, and suppose an antecedent Belief of *Christianity*, and particularly those *principal*

principal Facts Recorded in the *New Teſtament*, upon which the *whole Chriſtian Religion* turns. Theſe therefore are both freſh proofs of the Truth of thoſe Facts we have undertaken to prove, and do alſo ſtrengthen and confirm the *Tradition* of thoſe other Cuſtoms and Inſtitutions we have before inſtanced in; eſpecially if we conſider what the ſame Hiſtory, that gives us this account, informs us of, *viz.* that the *Chriſtian Cuſtoms now mention'd*, were not look'd upon as *ſuch neceſſary parts of that Religion*, nor *of ſo early an Original* as the *other*; and that both theſe and the former were in *ſeveral Places* and *Ages* practiſed after *ſeveral Manners*, with *different* additional *Rites* and *Ceremonies*; which *general Reception of ſome Cuſtoms and general diſtinctions* betwixt *Neceſſary* and *Unneceſſary*, *Subſtance* and *Manner* in *all* that were received, are certain Arguments of a *ſincere* and *well-examin'd Tradition.*

Another Set of Teſtimonies which *Euſebius* furniſhes us with, in behalf of the *Chriſtian Tradition*, are *Relicks, Buildings, and other ſuch like Monuments*; ſeveral of which were remaining in his Time

Time, and ſeen by him himſelf; ſuch were *Chriſtian Burying-Places* and *Sepulchres* with the *Names of Chriſtians upon them*; particularly thoſe of *Peter* and *Paul*; *Statues* and *Pictures*, particularly the Statue of the Woman cured by Chriſt of the Bloody Flux; Pictures of *Chriſt*, *Peter*, and *Paul*, in colours: Theſe were all ſeen by *Euſebius* himſelf, as was likewiſe the *Epiſcopal Chair* of *James* at *Jeruſalem*, ſeveral *Chriſtian Libraries*, and ſeveral *Chriſtian Temples*, before they were pull'd down and deſtroyed by the Order of *Diecleſian*. Theſe, and many other ſuch like Monuments remaining in *Euſebius*'s Time, whether all the *Particular Traditional Reports* concerning them were *true* or *falſe*, might eaſily be perceived upon view, or divers other ways be known to be *Ancient*; and, whatever Age they were of, they muſt be good proofs of the *Belief of the Men of thoſe Times*, and conſequently of the *truth of Chriſtianity*, ſo far as we are now concern'd to prove it.

But the *Tradition of Chriſtianity* from its *firſt Original*, down to the *Council* of *Nice*, with all the *principal Matters of Fact*

Fact upon which it is built, is further and more eſpecially ſecured to us, and the truth of all the foregoing Teſtimonies confirm'd by *Books* and *written Records: vaſt Numbers* of which of *different Kinds* and *different Ages*, written by *ſeveral Men* of *different Countries*, *Characters*, *Deſigns*, and *Religious Perſuaſions* were extant in *Euſebius*'s Time; a great many of which were *generally known*, *multitudes of Copies of them* being diſperſed throughout the World; and ſeveral of theſe Writings were *carefully preſerved* in particular places, and either never communicated further by any Tranſcripts or Copies, ot remaining there to be ſeen in their Primitive State after Tranſcription.

Now all theſe Writings, of what kind ſoever they are, whoſe Authority is made uſe of for the eſtabliſhing *the Chriſtian Faith*, I ſhall rank under certain diſtinct Heads, in order to ſhew what ſenſe and weight they have in the proof of what they are brought to maintain.

The ſeveral Books and Writings then to be conſidered, are: *Copies of the Holy Scriptures*, viz. of the Books of the *Old* and *New Teſtament*; *Publick Acts and Records*

Records belonging properly to *Societies*, and not to particular Authors; *Genuine Writings of profeſs'd Chriſtians*, who by reaſon of their common Agreement in ſome certain Doctrines of Chriſtianity are Styl'd *Orthodox*; *Books writ by Hereticks*, who were Men of particular Opinions different from thoſe commonly received by other Chriſtians; *Jewiſh and Pagan Books*, containing ſuch Things as have Relation to Chriſtianity; *Forged* and *Suppoſititious Writings of uncertain Authors*, which do ſome way or other concern the *Chriſtian Religion*.

As to *Copies of the Scriptures* found in the hands of Chriſtians in *Euſebius*'s Time, I have theſe Things to obſerve; that they were then *multiplyed* to ſo great a Variety, that hardly a Chriſtian Family was without ſome of the Books; That they were *Tranſlated* into *ſeveral different Languages*; That in thoſe Countries, where the Tranſlations were of common uſe, a *great many Copies* in the *Original Language* were preſerv'd; That in moſt of the great Cities and Epiſcopal Churches, there was a *Copy* in the Original Language *more ancient* than the reſt

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reſt, from whence the other Copies were taken, and Tranſlations made; That ſuch Copies as theſe might not only by *Tradition*, but by ſeveral *intrinſick Marks* be known to be ancient, and their Age pretty nearly determined; That, upon compariſon, there was a very great *Agreement* betwixt theſe *ancient Copies* preſerved in ſeveral very *diſtant* and *remote* Churches; That ſuch care had been taken in Tranſcribing and Tranſlating from them, that the *differences* found between any Copies either of the *Originals* or *Tranſlations* were *very inconſiderable*; That all Chriſtians thought themſelves concern'd to preſerve the *Jewiſh Canon of Scripture*, as well as the *New Teſtament*; and therefore *Copies* of the *Old Teſtament in the Original Tongue*, and *Tranſlations* of it into *ſeveral Vulgar Languages* were *multiplied*, *carefully Tranſcribed*, and *kept together with* thoſe of the New; That upon a diligent ſearch into the Matter it was found, that, beſides thoſe Copies of the greateſt part of the Books of the *New Teſtament* which were alike to be met with in *all* Chriſtian Churches, there were others received in *ſome* Churches, and by a conſtant Tradition then vouch'd

to

to be *as early*, and of *as great Authority* as the *reſt*.

From all which I think I may ſafely inferr, That the *Writings of the New Teſtament* were *as early* as they are pretended to be, and that the *Chriſtian Religion* had its *Original* in *Judea*, *at the time aſſigned* it; which being *leſs than* 300 *Years* before *Euſebius*; and the Books of the *New Teſtament*, which give an account of the Chriſtian Religion, and plainly ſuppoſe an antecedent Propagation and Eſtabliſhment of it in a great part of the World, being writ *ſome time after the firſt Publication*, *Euſebius*, or any other Perſon of his Age, who throughly examined the Matter concerning the Copies of the *Scriptures* then received, muſt needs be ſatisfied from this Conſideration only, that *the Books of the New Teſtament* had *as early* a Publication in the World as is now aſcribed to them, and conſequently that the *Chriſtian Faith* was ſomewhat *earlier* and the *ſame then* as it is in theſe Books repreſented to have been.

This will further be made out from the next ſort of Writings to be conſide-

red, *viz. Publick Acts and Records*, belonging properly to Societies, and not to particular Authors: ſuch were *Catalogues of Biſhops*, *Decrees of Synods*, *Letters from Churches* and *Societies of Men*, *general Records of remarkable Matters*, *particular Acts and Monuments of Martyrs*, *Pſalms*, *Hymns*, *Creeds*, and *Forms of Prayer*.

The moſt famous Churches, eſpecially thoſe conſtituted by Apoſtles, kept the Succeſſion of their Biſhops with great care laid up in their Archives, recording their Names and days of their Death in a pair of writing Tables: This *Euſebius* tells us was the Cuſtom of the Primitive Chriſtians; and theſe Tables he aſſures us he diligently examined, and he was very exact in the Account he took of them, as particularly appears from what he ſays concerning the Church of *Jeruſalem*, viz. That *he found from Old Records fifteen Biſhops, with their Names, who had ſucceeded in that Church, from the Apoſtles to the Siege of the* Jews *in* Adrian's Time; *but could not find preſerved in Writing the ſpace of Time each Biſhop ſpent in his Preſidency over that See.* The like diligence and exactneſs are obſervable in the Account he gives of the Succeſſion of Biſhops

ſhops in ſeveral other Churches, moſt of their Names being ſet down, and the times of their ſeveral Succeſſion, Preſidency, and Death punctually determined, and Reaſons given why he could not ſpeak with the ſame certainty of the reſt omitted.

There were likewiſe extant in his Time a great many *Canons and Decrees*, made by *ſeveral Councils and Synods*, convened at *ſeveral times*, in *different Countries*, and upon *different occaſions*; as alſo *ſeveral Letters* writ from *Churches* and Societies of Men ſuch as were the *Epiſtles of the Churches of* Vienna *and* Lyons *to the Churches of* Aſia and *Phrygia*, concerning their Martyrs; *Epiſtle of the Church* of *Smyrna* concerning the Martyrdom of *Polycarp*; *Epiſtle of the Martyrs of* Lyons *to* Eleutherus *Biſhop of* Rome; *Epiſtles of the Biſhops*, and *other Members of Synods*, inforcing the Obſervation of the Canons they made, *&c.* All which were, according to the Nature and Deſigns of them, either diſperſed far abroad, and to be found in ſeveral Countries, or elſe carefully preſerved in ſome particular places whither they were directed, and ſo re-

main'd there to be ſeen by ſuch as were pleaſed to conſult them.

Beſides ſuch *occaſional* Writings as theſe which, according to ſome particular Exigencies of the Church, were ſent abroad and communicated from one Society of Chriſtians to others, there were in ſeveral Places *Publick Hiſtories of all remarkable Affairs* that happened in each Place, continued down for a conſiderable ſpace of Time: ſeveral of which Publick Hiſtories or Records *Euſebius* conſulted, as he himſelf aſſures us, particularly when he gives us that wonderful Relation of *Agbarus King* of *Edeſſa*, he ſays he took it out of the *Publick Records kept at* Edeſſa, *wherein the Antiquities of the City and the Acts of* Agbarus *are contained:* And a great many other Memorable Facts he came by the ſame way.

In this manner were more eſpecially preſerved the *Acts and Monuments of ſuch as had ſuffered Martyrdom* upon the account of the Chriſtian Religion. The *Names* of abundance of Martyrs, the *Times* when they Suffered, the various ſorts and *kinds of Sufferings* they endured, with all the other Circumſtances relating

lating to their *Perſecution*, were largely ſet forth in Writing, and the Records of them carefully kept in many Countries, where the Cruelty and Violence of the *ſeveral long Perſecutions*, which had raged at *ſeveral diſtant Periods of Time*, were moſt remarkable.

Other Publick Writings extant in *Euſebius*'s Time, were *Hymns* and *Pſalms*, *Creeds* and *Forms of Prayer*: Several of which, that were conſtantly uſed in the Publick Aſſemblies of Chriſtians, were known to be of great Antiquity: And ſome of theſe ancient Forms of Worſhip were the ſame in many Churches, and ſeveral of them more or leſs different from one another.

Now 'tis plain to any one that examines any of theſe *Publick Writings* belonging to Societies of Chriſtians, that, whenſoever they were writ, and whether in all reſpects true or falſe, they are certain proofs of an antecedent Eſtabliſhment and Belief of the Chriſtian Religion, ſuch as it was in *Euſebius*'s Time, and ſuch as it was, and is now found in the *New Teſtament*; and all the Accounts we have of the Age and other Circumſtances of them, do

concurr to ſtrengthen the Evidence already given of the *Chriſtian Tradition.*

But the Truth of all thoſe Matters of Fact related in the *New Teſtament*, which I have at preſent engaged my ſelf to prove, will be more abundantly made out by a *continued Succeſſion* of a *vaſt number of Writings* belonging to *particular Perſons*, diſtinguiſh'd by the Titles of *Orthodox Chriſtians*, *Hereticks*, *Jews*, and *Heathens.*

A great many of theſe Writings are mention'd by *Euſebius*, and had been with incredible induſtry *read* and *examined* by him. Several he gives the *Titles* of only, others he gives ſome *Character* and *Account* of, and *Tranſcribes* large Paſſages out of them; a great many Orthodox Books he *omits* the mention of, for want of their Authors Names being prefix'd to them; others for want of being able to diſtinguiſh when their Authors lived; and a great many he *rejects* the Authority of, though they made for the Cauſe of the Chriſtian Religion which he maintained, becauſe they had not ſufficient Marks upon them, to prove they belong'd to the Perſons and Times they

they pretended to: Some of the Writings he quotes were *loſt in his Time*, and only Fragments of them to be found in others that were entirely extant; ſeveral that were then extant and mention'd by him, were *ſeen by a great many later Authors*, and all his Quotations out of them are confirm'd to us by their Writings, but the Originals of them are now *loſt*; and a great many remain *entire ſtill*, and are plainly the ſame he repreſented them to be, and ſo are the Fragments of more ancient Authors contained in them: All which are certain Arguments of the *Diligence* and *Sincerity of this Hiſtorian*, and the *Antiquity of thoſe Books*, whoſe Authority we are now to make uſe of.

In the next place then let us take a more particular view of theſe Writings, and conſider the *Age*, *Character*, and other *Circumſtances* of the *Authors*, the *Subjects* they treat about, and the *Form* and Manner in which they are writ.

As to the *Age* of thoſe Chriſtian Authors we call *Orthodox*, ſome ſmall Treatiſes and Fragments we have of ſuch as lived together *with the Apoſtles*, and were *immediate Witneſſes* of the

Doctrines delivered, and the mighty Works done by them; and ſeveral of theſe ancient Pieces are allowed to be *Genuine* by thoſe whoſe Skill and Enquiry into the Matter, have rendred them capable Judges. The Authors of the next Age who declare they lived *with thoſe who convers'd with the Apoſtles*, are *more*, their Writings *much larger*, and of *more unqueſtionable Authority* than the *other*, being confirmed by *more numerous Teſtimonies* of following Writers, who in very near Periods of Time continually ſucceeded them.

The *Character* of all theſe Writers was in ſome reſpects very *like*, and in others very *different*. Some of them were *Jews* and *Heathens converted to Chriſtianity*; others were *born of Chriſtian Parents*; many of them were *Greeks* and writ in *that Language*, and many were of *Roman Colonies*, and writ in *Latin*; but, though all the Authors we have, writ in one of theſe Languages, they were moſt of them of very *different*, and very *remote* Countries from one another: Several of the firſt Writers were *Plain Simple* Men, without the advantage of a Learned, Honourable, or Publick Education, others

of

of them were *Philoſophers*, and Men very well vers'd in all the Heathen Learning; ſome were of *Honourable Families*, and *Publick Employments*; many of them were *Biſhops* of the Chriſtian Church, and lived in the moſt conſiderable Cities of the *Roman Empire*, and by that means had great opportunities of being acquainted with the true State of Things in the World. In this they all agree that they were *hearty Believers* and *zealous Aſſertors* of the Chriſtian Religion, that they bottom'd their Faith upon the Books of the *New Teſtament*, that they made it the chief Buſineſs of their Lives and Writings to promote the Chriſtian Faith, and that they were ready to bear Teſtimony to the Truth of what they profeſs'd by reſigning their Lives; the ſincerity of which diſpoſition of theirs is confirm'd to us by the actual Martyrdom of ſeveral of them, who lived in ſuch Times and Places, as gave them opportunities of manifeſting their Faith and Chriſtian Reſolution this way.

But the *general Character of theſe Writers*, as well as the *Authority of what they ſay*, will be further made out from the conſideration of the *Subjects* they writ about,

bout, the ſeveral *kinds* and *ſorts* of their Writings, and the *Manner* in which they are writ. All which I ſhall endeavour to bring under one view, and raiſe ſuch Obſervations from them as will plainly confirm the main Concluſion I am to eſtabliſh.

The *common Subject* of all the Books and Writings of the *firſt Orthodox Authors* was *the Chriſtian Religion*, though in ſeveral Ways and Methods diſcourſed of. Moſt of theſe concern the *Hiſtory of Chriſtian Affairs*, either *expreſly* or *occaſionally*: For, beſides thoſe Authors, who purpoſely deſigned an Hiſtorical Relation either of the *Church in general*, or of ſome *particular Eccleſiaſtical Matter*, there's hardly a Chriſtian Writer within the Time of our preſent Enquiry, but has ſome occaſion or other to mention ſeveral Hiſtorical Paſſages in almoſt every Book that he wrote, in order to ſome further end he propoſed to himſelf in writing.

Now concerning the Writings of Chriſtian Authors, conſidered under this Character of *Hiſtorians*, I have theſe Things to obſerve.

Firſt,

Firſt, That they do manifeſtly *confirm* the truth of *all thoſe Traditions* and *ſtanding Monuments* before mentioned. For we have frequent Proofs of the Antiquity of the *Scriptures*, and all thoſe *Religious Cuſtoms* and *Inſtitutions* in uſe amongſt Chriſtians in *Euſebius*'s time, and the *General Tradition* ſtrengthen'd by abundance of *New Circumſtances*; ſuch were the great *Controverſies* and *Quarrels* about ſome Chriſtian Uſages, (particularly *Baptiſm*, and the *Feaſt of Eaſter*) together with the *Canons* and *Decrees* that were made, and the *Letters* that were writ with relation to theſe Affairs. Here is likewiſe mention made of the *ſame Chriſtian Relicks* and *Monuments*, and the *ſame publick Acts* and *Records* which *Euſebius* ſaw, and the Accounts and Extracts of them in ſeveral Authors agree with what *Euſebius* himſelf was witneſs of.

In the next place 'tis very plain, that they give us an account of ſeveral *other Cuſtoms*, *Monuments* and *publick Acts*, and abundance of *other particular Hiſtorical Paſſages*, beſides thoſe mention'd in *Euſebius*; the *Truth* of which, or the *Antiquity of their Fiction* being

ing proved, they are ſo many new Arguments in behalf of the Chriſtian Tradition, or the truth of thoſe Facts we are now to prove.

Thirdly, I obſerve that moſt of theſe Authors, conſidered as *Hiſtorians*, were very *Competent Judges* and *Credible Reporters* of the truth of the Facts they relate. For either they were actual and immediate Witneſſes of what they tell us themſelves, or they took a great deal of care to inform themſelves right, or the Facts were of that nature that they could not be deceived though they did not examine them very ſtrictly; and which way ſoever they came by them, they were *Faithful* and *Sincere* in their Relation. Several things they tell us *of their own Knowledge*, others they *quote their Authors for*, and others they deliver only as *Traditional Reports*, which they diſtinguiſh alſo into *Probable* and *Fabulous* according to the Evidence that then appeared to them upon a diligent Examination. And ſeveral of them have given great Marks of their *Diligence and Care in enquiring* as well as *Sincerity in reporting*: as particularly *Hegeſippus*, who gave an account of the Unity of Faith in

ſeveral

ſeveral Cities, after having travell'd through them, and convers'd with the Biſhops of them; *Clemens* who uſed all the care he could to inform himſelf of the Truth and Sincerity of the *Chriſtian Tradition* from ſeveral Eminent Perſons of different Countries; *Irenæus* who carefully remember'd the Converſation he had with Eminent Chriſtians in his Youth, aud was very much concern'd to have his own Writings deliver'd down faithfully to Poſterity: a proof of which firſt Remark concerning *Irenæus*, we have in an Epiſtle of his to *Florinus*, quoted by *Euſebus*, part of which I think worth the Tranſcribing, when reproving *Florinus* for ſome ill Opinions he held, he ſpeaks to him in this manner: "Theſe "Opinions the Presbyters who "lived before our times, who "alſo were the Diſciples of the *Apoſtles*, "did in no wiſe deliver unto thee: For I "ſaw thee (when being yet a Child, I "was in the Lower *Aſia* with *Polycarp*) "behaving thy ſelf very well in the Pa- "lace, and endeavouring to get thy ſelf "well eſteemed of by him; for I remem- "ber the things then done better then "what has happen'd of late; for what we "learnt

Euſ. Ec. H. l. 5. c. 26.

" learnt being Children increaſes toge-
" ther with the Mind it ſelf, and is cloſely
" united to it, inſomuch that I am able
" to tell where the Bleſſed *Polycarp* ſate
" and Diſcourſed; alſo his goings out and
" comings in, his manner of Life, the
" ſhape of his Body, the Diſcourſes he
" made to the Populace, the familiar Con-
" verſe which he ſaid he had with *John*,
" and with thoſe who had ſeen the *Lord*;
" and how he rehears'd their Sayings, and
" what they were which he had heard
" from them concerning the *Lord*; con-
" cerning his Miracles, and his Doctrine,
" according as *Polycarp* received them from
" thoſe who with their own Eyes beheld
" the Word of Life, ſo he related them,
" agreeing in all things with the *Scri-*
" *ptures*. Theſe things by the Mercy of
" God beſtowed upon me, I then heard
" diligently, and copied them out, not
" in Paper, but in my Heart; and by the
" Grace of God I do continually and ſin-
" cerely ruminate upon them. And the
ſame *Irenæus*, at the end of one of his
Pieces ſays thus. " I adjure thee who
" ſhalt Tranſcribe this Book, by our *Lord*
" *Jeſus*, and by his Glorious coming to
" Judge the Quick and the Dead, that
" you compare what you ſhall Tranſcribe,
" and

"and correct it diligently according to "that Copy whence you ſhall Tranſ- "cribe, and that in like manner you aſ- "cribe this Adjuration, and annex "it to your Copy. Which concern of *Irenæus* for the faithful conveyance of Truths contained in his own Writings to Poſterity, is a very good argument of his care in examining the Traditions and Writings that came down to him from elder times, reſpecting the ſame Important Truths.

A great many other ſuch like Inſtances as theſe may be given, where the Primitive Chriſtian Writers poſitively and expreſly declare, that they had ſeen and convers'd with the immediate Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, and with thoſe upon whom ſeveral great Miracles had been wrought by them, & had themſelves been Witneſſes of a gteat many wonderful Gifts remaining in the Church in their time; as likewiſe where they demonſtrate by many ſenſible Marks and Signs, the great Care and Diligence they had taken in examining the Informations they received from remoter Hands, and all other concurring Preſumptions ariſing from Circumſtances of Fact, and Rational Inferences.

And

And as they were *competent Witneſſes* and *careful Relators in General*, ſo are they *more eſpecially* to be relied upon, as to thoſe two great and concerning Matters of Fact the *Scriptures of the New Teſtament*, and *Perſecutions of Chriſtians*.

The *Truth* and *Authority of the Scriptures* was with much enquiry and examination Eſtabliſhed: This every one made it his buſineſs to be well aſſur'd of; and a free diſquiſition concerning the truth of ſome or other of the Books of Scripture is every where to be found among the Antient Writers.

Then as to the *Perſecutions* they were ſo many, they continued ſo long together, were ſo widely ſpread, were attended with ſo vaſt a number of very new and remarkalbe Facts, and ſo many of the Writers lived in the heat of them, and had ſo large a ſhare and concern in them themſelves, that 'tis impoſſible that the accounts they give of them, ſhould not be, moſt of them at leaſt, very true.

The Fourth Obſervation I have to make upon the *Hiſtorical* part of the firſt Chriſtian Writers, is that there are ſo many *Notes of time* to be found in them, ſuch a particular Deſignation of *Places* and *Perſons*

ſons, and ſuch a mixture of *Jewiſh* and *Heathen Affairs* with the Chriſtian Hiſtory, as rendred any Errours or Miſtakes ſo liable to a diſcovery at thoſe times, when the ſeveral Books that treat of theſe Matters were firſt Publiſhed to the World, that by not being confuted, they are, as to the main ſubſtance of what they declare, irrefragably confirm'd.

The *other Writings* of *Orthodox Chriſtians* of the firſt Ages, which do not concern the *Hiſtory of Chriſtianity*, are either *Vindications* and *Defences of the Chriſtian Religion* againſt all the Objections and Calumnies raiſed by any of the Enemies of it, or *Explications of the Chriſtian Doctrine*, *Government* and *Diſcipline*, or *Exhortations* and *Directions to Practiſe*, or *Animadverſions* and *Reproofs* for *Errours* and *Offences*: All which are written under the form of *Orations* or *Apologies*, *Letters*, *Diſputations*, *Comments*, &c.

Now it's plain from all theſe Writings, that the ſeveral Authors of them were *throughly convinced of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion*: This appears from the Zeal and Warmth with which many of them writ upon ſeveral occaſions to one another, and to *Hereticks*; the readineſs they teſtifie to

quit all they have, and to lay down their Lives rather than do any thing contrary to their Profeſſion; the concern they expreſs for the continuance of their Fellow-Chriſtians in the ſame Faith, and the Converſion of others to Chriſtianity; the Boldneſs and Courage they ſhew to Perſons of Power and Authority, when the truth of their Religion, or their own Innocence is call'd in queſtion, and from many other unqueſtionable marks of *Honeſty*, *Sincerity*, and a through *Perſwaſion*, viſible almoſt in every Page.

'Tis manifeſt likewiſe that all theſe Authors *believed the Scriptures of the New Teſtament*, and Founded their Religion upon them. Several of them have writ Comments upon them, all quote them and confirm the Doctrines they deliver, and the Rules and Directions they give from them; and all their Writings plainly declare they were very well vers'd in them and influenced by the ſame Spirit that governs there, and diſtinguiſhes thoſe Writings from any other; and, when ever any Controverſy happen'd in matters of Chriſtian Faith or Practiced, the Appeal is conſtantly made to theſe Scriptures.

Several

Several other Remarks and Obſervations might be drawn from the *Writings* of thoſe Chriſtians call'd *Orthodox*; but theſe are ſufficient for what I deſign to prove by them, and ſo I paſs on to conſider what we have written by *Heretieks*, *Jews* and *Heathens*, with relation to Chriſtianity.

A great many things were written by Perſons of theſe ſeveral Denominations in the Three firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Æra, but very little of them that expreſsly concerns *Chriſtianity* remains now, and a great many of theſe Writings were loſt in *Euſebius's Time*; ſo that almoſt all we know of them is contained in the *Orthodox* Writers: In many of which there are ſeveral conſiderable Fragments yet to be found, and accounts of what is loſt. From all which we may collect that none of the Enemies of the Chriſtian Religion, neither *Hereticks*, *Jews* nor *Heathens*, did at any time offer to diſprove or contradict thoſe Chriſtian Facts I have been now Eſtabliſhing, but did in ſeveral reſpects ſtrengthen and confirm the truth of them,

We find by the *Orthodox Writers*, that there were in the moſt Primitive Times, and continually, in all the after-Periods of Chriſtianity, a great many *Hereticks* of very *different Characters and Opinions*, who troubled the *Peace of the Church*, and endeavoured to corrupt the *Chriſtian Doctrine* and *Tradition*. Their Writings are full of the ſtrange Opinions of *Hereticks*; they are oftentimes very large in giving a Hiſtory of the Men, their vicious Lives, and wicked Deſigns; and in confuting their Abſurd, and, for the moſt part, Blaſphemous Doctrines. From hence we find that ſeveral of theſe *Hereticks*, in order to juſtifie their Errors, made uſe of all the Arts and Shifts they could; and ſome denied one Book of Scripture, and ſome another; ſome took upon them to reform the Scriptures, and added what they thought ſerv'd their turn, or took away what they did not like; Others made new Scriptures, and put them out in the Names of the Apoſtles; but none of them denied *the principal matters of Fact* contained in the *New Teſtament*, neither *Miraculous* nor *Common*, though their *Character* oftentimes allow'd, and their *Cauſe* requir'd ſuch a denial, if the Evidence

of

of thoſe Facts had not appear'd to them ſo ſtrong as to render all contradiction Vain and Ineffectual.

The *Jews* who writ againſt the *Chriſtian Religion*, allow'd *moſt* of the principal matters of Fact Recorded of *Chriſt* in the *New Teſtament*, even his *Miracles* as well as the *Common Hiſtory* of his Life; and when they deny the *Reality* they grant the *Pretence*, & are wholly concern'd to ſhew that *Chriſt* was not the *Meſſias* promiſed them, notwithſtanding his extraordinary Character; becauſe, as they thought, ſeveral of the Prophecies in the *Old Teſtament*, which were agreed on all hands to relate to the *Meſſias* could not be apply'd to *Chriſt*. In this conſiſted wholly the Controverſie betwixt them and the *Chriſtians*; and therefore are the *Jews* of theſe times cenſur'd by the *Chriſtian Writers*, as corrupting the *Old Teſtament* in ſuch Paſſages of it as ſeem'd to them to make moſt for the *Chriſtian Religion*: Particularly *Juſtin, in his Dialogue with a Jew*, endeavors to evince, That ſeveral Teſtimonies of the Prophets which he quoted was cut out of the *Bible* by the *Jews*, which charge whether true or falſe, proves thus much, that

the *Jews* had no other way of reſiſting the Evidence of the *Chriſtian Religion*, but by *denying*, or in ſome manner *evading* the Arguments drawn from the *Prophecies of the Old Teſtament*. Here they placed the chief ſtrength of their Cauſe, and not in the *Confutation* of the *Chriſtian Hiſtory*; the greateſt part of which is plainly granted in the Arguments they make uſe of to overthrow the *Faith* built upon it, and the *Inferences* drawn from it. Particularly *Joſephus* does comfirm the truth of ſeveral of the Facts related in the *New Teſtament*, and ſuch as neceſſarily determine the *Ori-riginal of Chriſtianity*.

The like account, in a great meaſure, may be given of the *Heathens* whoſe Writings do any ways concern *Chriſtianity*: For neither thoſe of them that were Inſtrumental in the Perſecution of *Chriſtians*, nor thoſe who endeavour to overthrow the truth of their Religion by Arguments, do deny any of thoſe matters of Fact related in the *New Teſtament*, which we have diſtinguiſhed by the Title of *Common Hiſtorical Facts*; and a great many of them are confirm'd by other *Heathen Writers*, who treat of their own affairs only, or

mention

mention Chriſtian Matters occaſionally, as they happen'd to be intermixt with thoſe Things they deſignedly writ about. Nay, ſome of thoſe that writ expreſly againſt the Chriſtian Religion, do not only allow that *Chriſt pretended* to *Miracles*, and that he did thoſe Things Recorded of him in *appearance*, (as was the Opinion of ſeveral of them) but that he did *really* work thoſe very *Miracles* he pretended to: But then they endeavour to leſſen the Credit of them, and deſtroy the Doctrines built upon them, either by aſcribing them (as many of the *Jews* likewiſe did) to *Magick* and *Evil Spirits*; or ſhewing that ſeveral of their own Religion had done as extraordinary Things as any that were attributed to *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*.

A great many of theſe *Heathen Writings* are quoted, ſome of them particularly Anſwer'd and Confuted, and ſeveral large Pieces of them inſerted in the *Books of Chriſtian Authors*. There we find, beſides a great many *Paſſages out of Private Authors*, and *Common Traditions*, ſeveral *Reſcripts*, *Edicts* and *Letters* of *Roman* Emperors, either mentioned or tranſcribed; and ſeveral *Publick Acts*

and *Records* compiled by the Authority of *Heathens*, and in their keeping, appeal'd to with the greateſt Confidence and Aſſurance imaginable, as extant in the Writers Time that Cites them, and generally known: Particularly we meet with divers of theſe *Heathen Monuments* in the *Chriſtian Apologies*, which were at ſeveral times, by different Writers, Dedicated to *Roman Emperors*, the *Senate* of *Rome*, and *Governors of Provinces*.

Many ſuch Proofs and Evidences as theſe of the *Chriſtian Faith* and *Hiſtory*, are ſtill to be found in the *Chriſtian Books* which were writ before *Euſebius*, and are now extant: But there were alſo extant in his Time ſeveral of the ſame *Heathen Books* out of which thoſe Teſtimonies were taken, and others which gave the ſame Account of Chriſtian Affairs; which was look'd upon by *Euſebius* to be ſo notorious a Truth, that when he talks of the State of Chriſtianity under *Domitian*, he confirms what he ſays by the Authority of *Heathen Writers*, without thinking it neceſſary to name any particular Author:

Euſ. E. H. l. 3. c. 18. "So mightily (ſays he) did the "Doctrine of our Faith flouriſh in thoſe "fore-

"foremention'd Times, that even thoſe "Writers who are wholly eſtranged from "our Religion, (by which he plainly "means Heathens) have not thought it "troubleſome to ſet forth in their Hiſto-"ries both this Perſecution, and alſo the "Martyrdoms ſuffered therein; and they "have alſo accurately ſhewn the very "Time; relating that in the Fifteenth "Year of *Domitian*, *Flavia Domitilla*, "Daughter of the Siſter of *Fabius Cle-"mens*, at that time one of the Conſuls "of *Rome*, was, together with many o-"thers, baniſhed into the Iſland of *Pon-"tia*, for the Teſtimony of *Chriſt*.

There are likewiſe *ſeveral Heathen Authors* ſtill *ſeparately* extant, out of which may be Collected a great many Paſſages, which give a concurrent Evidence of the Truth of the *Chriſtian Hiſtory* as *Tacitus* and *Pliny* before quoted, and divers others; and there is nothing to be found in any of them that does, in the leaſt, contradict any of the principal Matters Fact now to be proved.

But, beſides theſe Writings which are acknowledged to be *Genuine*, and the true and proper Works of thoſe Perſons whoſe

whoſe Names they bear, whether *Orthodox Chriſtians*, *Hereticks*, *Jews* or *Heathens*, there were a great many other in the Primitive Times of Chriſtianity, written by *uncertain Authors*; and either *purpoſely Publiſhed* under falſe Names and Titles, with a deſign to promote the Belief of the *Chriſtian Religion in general*, or to advance and defend ſome *particular Notions* and *Practices* which the Authors of them approved, and had a mind to recommend to the World; or elſe by ſome miſtake aſcribed to thoſe Perſons to whom they did not really belong. Such were a great many *falſe Goſpels*, *Acts*, *Epiſtles* and *Revelations*, and ſeveral other Hiſtorical and Doctrinal Diſcourſes, Publiſhed under the Names of *Chriſt*, the *Virgin Mary*, the *Apoſtles*, and *Eminent Chriſtians* of the ſucceeding Ages; ſuch were alſo ſeveral *Letters* ſaid to be Writ by *Pilate*, *Seneca*, and *Lentulus*, the *Oracles of the Sybils*, and ſeveral other Writings attributed to ſome conſiderable *Heathens*, a Paſſage in *Joſephus* relating to Chriſt, *&c.* All which, ſuppoſing them *all Forged*, or only *ſome* of them ſo, *ſome accidentally miſtaken*, and *others doubtful*; whoever were the Authors of them, ſo long as it plainly

plainly appears they were of ſuch and ſuch Antiquity, they are certain proofs of the *general Faith of Chriſtians*, at the reſpective Times when any of them were Publiſhed, and conſequently of the Truth of thoſe Facts in queſtion; foraſmuch as they all evidently ſuppoſe an antecedent Belief of the Chriſtian Religion, founded upon thoſe Facts, as is viſible by all the Remains we have left of them; and therefore are as good Arguments of the Truth of what I am proving, as the moſt *Genuine unqueſtionable* Writings of any other Author whatſoever, *viz.* That the *common Hiſtorical Facts related in the New Teſtament* are true.

Which Point, I think, is proved by ſuch a *multitude* and *variety* of Evidence, that I may take it for granted, That *Jeſus Chriſt* who lived and was Crucified at *Jeruſalem*, in the Reign of *Tiberius Ceſar*, was the *firſt Author of the Chriſtian Religion*; That the *Characters*, *Sufferings* and *Pretences* of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, and the *Doctrines* taught by them, were the *ſame* we find repreſented in *the Books of the New Teſtament*, and that the *Chriſtian Religion* there delivered, was

propagated

propagated through the World, and *thoſe Books writ*, according to the Time, Manner, and Circumſtances there mentioned, between the middle of *Tiberius*, and the beginning of *Trajan*'s Reign; and conſequently that the *Chriſtian Faith*, as to the *principal Facts* and *Doctrines* contain'd *in the New Teſtament*, *was always the ſame*, from the Time of *Tiberius* to the *Council of Nice*, and from thence to the preſent Age; the *greateſt part of the Scriptures* having been *always acknowledged* to be the *Genuine Works* of thoſe whoſe Names they bore, and to contain the *unalterable grounds* of the Chriſtian Religion; and the *Sum* of what Chriſtians were obliged to believe.

2. In the next place then, I am to prove that thoſe extraordinary Facts Recorded in the *New Teſtament*, which we call *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, were really true, according the Relation there given of them.

That they were conſtantly believed to be true by all Chriſtians ever ſince the Time in which they are firſt ſaid to happen, has already been proved; but whether

whether their Faith was well grounded, or not, is now the Enquiry: That it was, I ſhall prove by ſhewing that the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Teſtament*, are related and atteſted in ſuch a manner, that the Truth of them cannot poſſibly be called in queſtion.

But that the ſtrength and validity of what I have to ſay upon this Head, may be better, and more clearly perceived, I think fit, by way of Introduction, to ſhew,

Firſt, What I mean by *Miracles* and *Prophecies*; and,

Secondly, What kind of Evidence theſe Facts are capable of, and which way they are to be proved.

By *Miracles*, then, I would now be underſtood to mean only ſtrange unuſual Events, out of the common Road and Courſe of Things, which by all the Knowledge we have of Nature, we cannot tell how to bring to paſs, nor account for, when they have happened: And theſe are to be diſtinguiſhed into ſuch as are abſolutely, at all Times

ſtrange,

ſtrange, and not to be accounted for by what we know of the Power and Force of Nature, as *the Reſurrection of the Dead*, &c. And ſuch as are ſo only in conſideration of ſome particular Circumſtances; as *healing the Sick*, which is in it ſelf no ſtrange Thing, but only when 'tis done in a ſhorter Time than Medicines were ever known to operate, or without the aſſiſtance of any viſible means, or the like.

By *Prophecies*, I here underſtand Relations of ſuch future Events, as have no perceivable connexion with the State of Things at the Time when they are uttered.

This is all I mean at preſent by *Miracles* and *Prophecies*; and every Body I am ſure will allow me that there are a great many ſuch Matters of Fact as theſe mention'd in the *New Teſtament*: How, and by what means they were done, whether they were *Natural* or *Supernatural Effects*; whether they were the *Works* of *Art* or *Magick*; whether *God* or *Man*, or ſome *Good* or *Evil Spirit* was the Autohr of them, is not my preſent buſineſs to enquire; that belongs to another place: All that I have now undertaken to ſhew, is that they were ſome

Way

way or other really done, according to the Relation we have of them in the *New Teſtament*.

Now I know of no other way of proving this, but by the *Number* and *Character of the Witneſſes* who atteſt the Ttuth of theſe Facts, and by the *Nature* and *Circumſtances of the Facts* themſelves, according as they appear from the Account the Witneſſes give of them. If the Witneſſes are ſuch, as we have no reaſon to think, could be deceived themſelves in what they relate, or would offer to impoſe upon others; and if the Facts are ſuch as could not be repreſented by the Witneſſes otherwiſe than they were, without a certain diſcovery of the Falſhood of their Relation, nothing more can be required to juſtifie our Belief of the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Teſtament*.

This being premiſed, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that the Chriſtian *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Teſtament*, have all the forementioned Characters of Truth belonging to them, and are therefore very reaſonably and juſtly believed to be true; which is the

Thing

Thing I have obliged my ſelf to make good, and ſhall proſecute my Deſign in the following Method.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the *Miracles* by themſelves, and this according to the different Periods in which they were done, and the different Perſons they were done by.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider the *Prophecies* apart according to the ſame diſtinction of Times and Perſons, as I obſerve in treating of *Miracles*.

Thirdly, I ſhall make ſome general Reflections with Relation to the proof of the Chriſtian *Miracles* and *Prophecies* taken altogether.

Firſt, Then as to *Miracles*; 'tis very plain that a great many ſuch Facts as theſe, that I call *Miracles*, are ſaid to be done by *Jeſus Chriſt*: This is every where aſſerted or ſuppoſed in the *New Teſtament*; and the *Goſpels* give a very particular and circumſtantial Account of ſeveral of them. 'Tis certain alſo, from the general Proofs before given of the *Hiſtory* of the *New Teſtament*, that theſe *Miracles* were believed by the firſt Chriſtians, both by thoſe that lived in *Judea*, and thoſe that dwelt

dwelt in other Countries; and the real Truth of them will as evidently appear, if we conſider the Grounds and Reaſons upon which they were at firſt believed.

The greateſt part of the *Miracles* Recorded of *Chriſt*, were done in the preſence of great Multitudes, at the moſt Publick Places in *Judea*, and at the moſt ſolemn Times of Meeting: Nay, he was ſo conſtantly imployed in Travelling and going about, and performing ſo many Signs and Wonders where-ever he came, and gave ſo many repeated inſtances of his Power in the ſame Places, that there were very few in that whole Country, who had not ſeen ſome of his mighty Works themſelves; and therefore the ſole Ground and Reaſon upon which the generality of the firſt Chriſtians of *Paleſtine* believed theſe *Miracles*, was the *Teſtimony of their own Senſes.*

The Facts themſelves were ſo level to their Capacities, and the manner of doing them was ſo open, and ſo eaſily and fully perceived, that they found no reaſon to diſtruſt their Senſes, and therefore they readily concluded them to be true.

A great many of the firſt Believers of *Chriſt*'s *Miracles*, had a further and more intimate perception of the Truth of them than the reſt, *viz.* thoſe upon whom ſome of the *Miracles* were wrought, or who were made to have a ſhare in the Actions themſelves: Such were all thoſe that were healed or fed by *Chriſt*, that had Devils caſt out of them, that had their ſecret Thoughts or private Actions revealed to them, *&c.*

Thoſe who ſaw none of theſe mighty Works themſelves, but believed upon the Teſtimony of others, were confirm'd in their Faith by an univerſal concurrence of all Perſons their Curioſity or Concern diſpoſed them to enquire of: For, as we read in the *New Teſtament*, all kinds of People believed the *Miracles of Chriſt*; not only thoſe who reverenced his Perſon and Character, and imbraced his Doctrine, but even thoſe who deſpiſed him and ſet him at nought, and rejected his *Goſpel*.

The *Scribes* and *Phariſees* who were the moſt Powerful and moſt Zealous Enemies of *Chriſt* and his *Goſpel*, acknowledged his *Miracles*, but attributed them to *Evil Spirits*. Some of the *Phariſees* could

could not deny his wonderful Cure of a Blind Man, but would not allow that he *was of God, becauſe he kept not the Sabbath-day*; though *others of them ſaid, how can a Man that is a Sinner do ſuch Miracles?* None of the *Jews*, upon the ſtricteſt Examination, were able to diſprove this or any other of his *Miracles*; but notwithſtanding, they would not believe in *Chriſt* or embrace his Doctrine, becauſe *they were Moſes's Diſciples, and they knew that God ſpake unto Moſes; but as for that Fellow* who cured the Blind Man, *they knew not from whence he was.*

The *Chief Prieſts* and *Elders* never doubted of the mighty Works done by him, but only queſtion'd *his Authority* in doing them. *Among the Chief Rulers many believed on him, but did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould have been put out of the Synagogue.* His Country-men acknowledg'd that *mighty Works were wrought by his hands*, but were offended becauſe ſo mean a Perſon did them, whoſe Birth, Relations and Education they knew. The *Gergeſenes* were aſtoniſhed at the wonderful Things he did, though they *beſought him to depart out of their Coaſts:* And the *Devils* confeſſed

his Power before they were caſt out, though *he came to torment them before the time.* A great many were convinced of the Truth of his *Miracles*, but did not hearken to what he taught, becauſe *none of the Rulers or Phariſees believed on him*; and becauſe they took him for a *Galilean*, and thought that *no Prophet aroſe out of Galilee.* Several would not believe on him, becauſe they *knew whence he was*; and when *Chriſt* came, *no Man* they ſuppoſed *knew from whence he was*; though they were thus anſwered by others who believed, *when Chriſt cometh will he do more Miracles than theſe which this Man has done?* Some were entirely ſatisfied of his Miraculous Power, by being healed by him, as Nine of the *Ten Lepers*, and nevertheleſs regarded him not. Abundance of People accompanied him where-ever he went, and were continual Witneſſes of the *Signs* and *Miracles* done by him, and yet followed him not for the ſake of them, but becauſe they were fed by him. And many there were that *believed in his Name when they ſaw the Miracles that he did*; *but Jeſus did not commit himſelf to them, becauſe he knew all Men.* So that all theſe bore Teſtimony to the Truth

of

of the greateſt part of *Chriſt*'s *Miracles*, as well as thoſe who became his Diſciples, and imbraced his Doctrine.

But other *Miracles* there are Recorded of *Chriſt*, which were done in the preſence of his *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples* only, who already believed on him; ſome of which continually attended him, and others of them were very frequently with him. Several of theſe *Miracles* were done in his Life-time; ſometimes before the whole Twelve, who are peculiarly Styled *Apoſtles*; ſometimes before a Select Number of the Twelve; ſometimes before a promiſcuous Company of his *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples* together: After his Death, he appeared at ſeveral times to different Perſons and different Companies; but his Reſurrection, and whatever he did or ſaid during Forty Days Converſing upon Earth after he was riſen, his Aſcenſion into Heaven, and Miſſion of the *Holy Ghoſt*, with many extraordinary Signs and Wonders, none were Witneſſes of, but his own *Diſciples* and *Followers*: And therefore the Truth of all theſe *Miracles* muſt principally depend upon the Credit of the *Diſciples of Chriſt* that relate them.

Beſides all theſe wonderful things immediately attributed to *Chriſt himſelf*, we meet with ſeveral others in the *New Teſtament*, which are repreſented as done by *ſome other Power*, but are ſuch as have a manifeſt relation to Chriſt, and are deſigned to confirm the truth of his Pretences: Such were the Appearance of *Angels* to *Mary* the Mother of *Chriſt*, *Zachariah* the Father of *John*, and to the *Shepherds*; the appearance of a Star in the Eaſt to the Wiſe-Men; the Dumbneſs of *Zachariah*, and other Signs that attended the Birth of *John* and *Chriſt*; the Dove and Voice from Heaven at the Baptiſm of *Chriſt*; the Darkneſs, Earthquake, Renting of the Vail of the Temple, and Reſurrection of dead Bodies at his Crucifixion. Several of theſe things could not be known immediately to the *Evangeliſts* that relate them, or to any *other Diſciples of Chriſt*, but to thoſe only whom they are told of, and upon their credit we muſt in a great meaſure rely for the truth of them; but ſeveral of them were very publick; and conſeqently the truth of theſe reſts upon the Teſtimony of a great number of Witneſſes beſides thoſe that relate them.

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In this manner are the *Miracles of Chriſt*, and all the Wonders and Signs that accompanied him, from his Conception to his Miſſion of the Holy Spirit upon his Apoſtles, Related and Atteſted in the *New Teſtament*.

But of the ſame *Jeſus Chriſt*, who has ſo many wonderful things there reported of him, it is farther teſtified, that he conferred a power of working Miracles upon a great many of his Followers, who believed in him; and that a great many Miracles were accordingly performed by their Hands. In his Life-time 'tis ſaid, that he gave this Power to *Twelve Apoſtles* and *Seventy Diſciples*, whom he ſent out into all the Towns and Villages of *Judea*, with a Commiſſion to *Preach his Goſpel*, to *caſt out Devils*, and to *cure Diſeaſes* and they went about *Preaching the Goſpel*, and *Healing every where*, and *the Devils were ſubject to them through his Name*. This we have their own Teſtimony for; and whoever were Cured or Diſpoſſeſſed by them, and all that ſaw what they did are ſo many more Witneſſes of the Miracles they wrought, but none of the Particular Facts or Circumſtances of them are mentioned.

After the Aſcenſion of *Chriſt* we read that *the Twelve Apoſtles*, being *all with one accord in one place*, received a larger power of working all kind of Miracles by the Miſſion of the *Holy Ghoſt*; who, according to the promiſe of *Chriſt*, was to be conſtantly with them, to guide and aſſiſt them in the whole courſe of their Miniſtry. This Power immediately ſhewed it ſelf by their ſpeaking in ſeveral different Languages before unknown to them; the Witneſſes of which Fact are not only theſe Apoſtles themſelves, but a great many others that heard them; *Parthians, and Elamites, and the Dwellers in Meſopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Aſia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and Strangers of Rome, Jews and Proſelytes, Cretes and Arabians*, who were *amazed* to hear *Galileans ſpeak in their Tougues the wonderful things of God.* Thoſe alſo confirm the truth of the Fact who fooliſhly imputed it to *New Wine.*

After this we read of a great many other Miracles of different kinds performed by ſeveral *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples*, who received their Power immediately from *Jeſus Chriſt*; and, by the account that is given

given us of them, we find that the particular Facts were more numerous, more frequent, and more publick then thoſe of their Maſter *Chriſt* himſelf. The time of *Chriſt's* Miniſtry was but Three Years or thereabouts, the Exerciſe and Manifeſtation of his Power was confined to the Country of *Paleſtine*, and whatever mighty things he did, he did them in his own ſingle Perſon: Whereas the *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples* of *Chriſt* were a great many; all which were conſtantly imployed in Preaching the Goſpel, and confirming it every where with Signs and Wonders, during the whole courſe of their ſeveral Lives; and they performed this Work with Diligence, not only in *Judea* and *Samaria*, but in divers other Cities and Countries throughout the whole *Roman Empire*.

By which Account it plainly appears, that moſt of the ſame Perſons, who were Witneſſes of thoſe Miracles of *Jeſus Chriſt*, were alſo Witneſſes of thoſe that were done by the Hands of *his Apoſtles* and *Diſciples*; the truth of which was likewiſe owned and acknowledged by a vaſt Multitude more, both of ſuch as believed the *Goſpel*, and of ſuch as rejected and oppoſed it, and

and violently Perſecuted the Teachers of it.

To omit the Teſtimony of true Believers, thus it is Recorded concerning thoſe upon whom the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt* had no Power nor Influence: The *Rulers*, *Elders*, *Scribes* and *High Prieſts* among the *Jews*, when they ſummoned *Peter* and *John* before them for curing a Lame Man, *could not deny but that a notable Miracle had been done by them, which was manifeſt to all them that dwelt at Jeruſalem.* They were afterwards *filled with Indignation*, and *took Counſel to ſlay them*, becauſe they could not reſtrain them from doing more *Miracles* in the Name of *Chriſt*; but they never queſtioned the Truth of the Facts. *Stephen full of Faith and Power, did great Wonders and Miracles among the people*; but he was accuſed and condemned by the *Council* of the *Jews*, not for deceiving the People with falſe Miracles, but for ſpeaking things *againſt the Holy Place and the Law*, for ſaying that *Jeſus ſhould deſtroy that Place, and change the Cuſtoms which* Moſes *delivered them*; when at the ſame time it is ſaid, that *all that ſat in the Council looking ſtedfaſtly on him, ſaw his Face as it had*

had been the Face of an Angel: Neither had they any Thing to object againſt his Life or his Works. *Simon*, the Sorcerer, *to whom all the people in Samaria gave heed from the leaſt to the greateſt*, looking upon him to be *the great Power of God*, was *himſelf* as well as thoſe that *were bewitched* by him, *Baptized* by *Philip*, and *believed when he beheld the Miracles and Signs that were done*: But afterwards we find, by *the wickedneſs of his heart*, which he diſcovered to *Peter*, that he was an Enemy to the true Doctrine of the *Goſpel*. *Elymas* the *Sorcerer*, who was ſtruck Blind by *Paul*, and yet not converted to *the Faith*, is another unwilling Witneſs of the Power of the *Apoſtles*. The People of *Lyſtra* confirm the ſame Truth who took *Paul* and *Barnabas* for *Gods in the likeneſs of Men*, by reaſon of the Miracles they ſaw performed by them, and afterwards, by the Inſtigation of the *Jews*, ſtoned *Paul*. The *Damſel poſſeſs'd with a Spirit of Divination*, and *her Maſters who ſaw the hope of their gains gone*, by *Paul's* commanding the Spirit to come out of her, ſeveral *Vagabond Jews Exorciſts*, who took upon them to caſt out Evil Spirits in *the Name of Jeſus*, but ſuffered

ſuffered very much for the Impudence of their Pretences; and a great many other ſuch like, were Witneſſes of the *Miracles of the Apoſtles*, who by reaſon of ſome wicked or diſhonourable Motives rejected the *Doctrine* they taught; or profeſs'd to imbrace it upon ill Deſigns; or, after they had received it *made Shipwrack of the Faith*: Great Complaints of all which ſort of Men we find in the *Epiſtles*.

Thus are the *Miracles of the firſt Apoſtles* and *Diſciples of Chriſt* declared and atteſted.

But moreover it is Recorded of them, that they had not only a Power of working Miracles *themſelves*, but that they were Authorized and Enabled by *Chriſt* and *his Spirit* to convey the like Power to others: And accordingly we find a great many Inſtances in the *New Teſtament*, where Miracles were wrought by *private Chriſtians*, by Virtue of a Power they had received from the *Apoſtles*, which was conferred upon them by Prayer and Impoſition of Hands: After which Actions of the *Apoſtles* they are immediately ſaid to be *filled with the Holy*

Holy Ghoſt, and to have *received the Gifts of the Spirit*; which, according to the different exigencies of the Church, and the different qualifications of the Perſons indued with them, were divers: And among theſe are reckoned the *Gifts of Tongues* and *of Interpretation*; *the Gifts of Healing* and *of Miracles*; which Gifts are ſaid to be very common among the firſt Converts to Chriſtianity, in all places where the Goſpel was Preach'd; and the ſame is plainly implied by the frequent Rules and Cautions that are given by the *Apoſtles* concerning the due Exerciſe of them, and the fear and apprehenſion they often expreſs, leſt the Chriſtians thus impowered, ſhould, by coveting one anothers Gifts, or being puft up with thoſe they were ſeverally poſſeſſed of, neglect to apply themſelves, as they ought to do, to the Edification of the *Church of Chriſt*.

This is the Scripture-Account of *Miracles*, and theſe were thoſe wonderful Facts believed by the firſt *Chriſtians*; their full aſſurance of the Truth of which was the chief Ground and Motive

tive of their imbracing the *Goſpel* or Doctrine of *Chriſt*.

There were likewiſe other ſtrange Matters of Fact called *Prophecies*, which were *moſt ſurely believed* among them, and which contributed very much to their receiving the Goſpel, and *continuing in the Profeſſion* of Chriſtianity *without wavering*; and theſe I ſhall conſider in the ſame Way and Method I did *Miracles*. For there are ſeveral Prophecies Recorded in the New Teſtament as uttered *by our Saviour himſelf*, together with ſeveral other ſpoken *with relation to him* and *fulfilled by him*; others there are mentioned as ſpoken *by the Apoſtles and Diſciples of Chriſt* who had received the Power of Prophecy immediately from him: 'Tis plain alſo from ſeveral Inſtances and Paſſages in the Sacred Writings, that the Spirit of Prophecy was conveyed by the firſt Apoſtles and Diſciples to *private Chriſtians*, and was very common among them.

The Prophecies ſpoken by *our Saviour*, were moſt of them delivered *in private* to his *Diſciples*; ſome of which were not written till after the things happened, and the truth of theſe the Diſciples are wholly anſwerable for; and ſome of them were

were Publiſhed in Writing before the things happened, and theſe might then, and may ſtill be examined by the Circumſtances of them; others of them were ſpoken *publickly* and *frequently* before great Multitudes of People, as thoſe about his *Suffering* and *Reſurrection*, &c. and ſeveral, beſides their being ſpoken openly, in the preſence of many, were alſo ſpread abroad in Writing long before the Events actually happened, as particularly that remarkable one concerning the *Deſtruction of Jeruſalem.*

Prophecies ſpoken *of Chriſt in former times*, with relation to his Perſon, Actions, Sufferings and Doctrine, with the ſeveral Circumſtances belonging to the whole Diſpenſation of his Goſpel, are to be found written in the Books of the *Old Teſtament*, which were manifeſtly wrote long before his coming into the World, and are now Extant, and might then, and may ſtill be compared with thoſe Events related in the *New*, which are pretended to be completions of them: And ſome Prophecies there are concerning *our Saviour*, ſpoken by *Holy Perſons* a little before and after his Birth, and at his Preſentation in the Temple, as alſo others concerning

cerning *John his Forerunner*; and all the Preaching of *John* was Prophetical of *Christ*.

The truth of all which Matters of Fact does not depend wholly upon the Credit of the *Prophets* themselves, but upon the Testimony of those also that heard them; and some of them were spoken before much Company; particularly what *John* said of *Christ* was very publick, and frequently repeated, and consequently there were great numbers of Witnesses of it.

The particular Prophecies of the first *Apostles* and *Disciples*, and *other Christians*, preserved in the *New Testament*, are but few, and most of the Events foretold, were so near the time of their Prediction, that we cannot certainly tell whether they were written before they were fulfilled; but some of them there were many Witnesses of, and consequently the truth of them does not depend wholly upon the credit of their Relation.

But what is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures of the *New Testament* concerning the *Gift of Prophecy* in the *Church*, (by which Expression is often signified an extraordinary Power of foretelling future Events as well as interpreting Scripture) is a plain Appeal to the Testimony of all Christians in general:

general: For, according to the account there given, ſo many were indued with it, that 'twas an eaſy matter in any place where the Goſpel was ſpread, to be ſatisfied of the truth of the matter whether there were any *Chriſtian Prophets* or not.

Thus have I taken a ſhort view of the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Teſtament*, and ſhewn how they were all atteſted, and upon what grounds they were at firſt believed.

In the next place, I ſhall make ſome general Reflections upon the account here given, in order to evince the truth of theſe extraordinary Facts, and the reaſonableneſs of thoſe Grounds upon which the *firſt Chriſtians* believed them.

It has been obſerved before, that when any Matters of Fact are atteſted by ſuch *Witneſſes* as cannot be imagined *capable of being deceived* themſelves, or *willing to deceive* others, and the *Facts* related by them are ſuch as could not poſſibly be repreſented falſly without a certain diſcovery, no greater evidence can be required for the proof of them: And that the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* mentioned in the *New Teſta-*

ment are ſuch kind of Facts, and ſo atteſted, will plainly appear from the following Conſiderations.

Firſt of all 'tis certain, from the account before given, that *Chriſt pretended* to do a great many Miracles, and that vaſt Multitudes of People *pretended* to have ſeen a great many Miracles done by him, and to believe that what they ſaw was truly and really performed by his means; and ſome *pretended* further to have experienced the effects of this ſtrange power in themſelves: From whence it evidently follows, that all theſe Miracles ſo atteſted were true; becauſe it was very eaſie for *Chriſt* to know whether he had ſuch a Power as this or not, by an *immediate Conſciouſneſs*, and therefore he *could not be deceived* in pretending to what he had not; and the Sincerity, Innocence, and Integrity of his Life, the Diſintereſtedneſs, of all his Actions, the Humility and Uprightneſs of his Carriage, and the many Troubles, Sufferings and Afflictions he was actually expoſed to upon account of theſe Pretences, and which by his great Wiſdom and Knowledge of Men he eaſily foreſaw would happen to him; all theſe, I ſay, do ſufficiently aſſure us that he

he *would not offer to deceive* others, by pretending to ſuch Works which he knew he had not done, or could not do.

Then as to the *Perſons pretending to have ſeen*, and, for that reaſon, *to believe* his Miracles, *they could not be deceived*; becauſe the matters of Fact they are Witneſſes of, are ſuch as were the proper Objects of Senſe, and were as eaſily, diſtinctly and fully perceivable, as any other the moſt common obvious Events dayly taken notice of; ſo that *every one who had Ears to hear*, and *Eyes to ſee*, was a capable Judge of what *Chriſt* ſaid and did, and there wanted no great skill or capacity of underſtanding to compare his *Pretences* with his *Performances*.

But thoſe who *felt the effects of this wonderful Power in themſelves*, had a more intimate and more infallible preception of the truth of his Miracles, which gave them greater aſſurance of their not being deceived.

And when we conſider the number of thoſe who had all, at the ſame time, the ſame Preceptions, 'tis a further confirmation of the truth and reality of the Appearances; eſpecially when we obſerved that a great many of theſe were poſſeſſed with

violent Prejudices againſt the *Perſon* and *Doctrine of Chriſt*, and were unwilling to believe any thing that ſeemed any way to juſtifie his Pretences.

And as all theſe Witneſſes of the *Miracles of Chriſt*, cannot poſſibly be imagined to have been *miſtaken themſelves*, in thinking they perceived what they did not really perceive; ſo neither was it poſſible for them to *deceive others*, by telling them ſuch things were done in their preſence which they knew were not done: For, beſides that 'tis utterly inconceivable how ſo great a Multitude of Perſons of different *Places*, *Degrees*, and *Opinions*, as the firſt Witneſſes of theſe Miracles were, ſhould agree together to aſſert that they ſaw ſuch Facts as were never done; and this conſtantly without any ones ever diſcovering the Cheat; beſides this, I ſay the *Characters* of the Witneſſes will not ſuffer us to think they could entertain a deſign of impoſing upon the World; and the Manner and Circumſtances of their firſt Declaration of their Belief of the Miracles, makes a Confederacy to deceive utterly impoſſible.

As to the Characters of the Witneſſes, they were either ſuch Perſons as after they

they had ſeen, believed and imbraced the Goſpel of *Chriſt*, or ſuch as continued in the Religion they were before educated in, notwithſtanding all the Miracles they ſaw: Moſt of the former ſort were Perſons of remarkable Probity and Integrity, and of great Simplicity of Life and Manners, who renounced all the Intereſts and Advantages of this preſent World, and expoſed themſelves to great variety of Troubles and Afflictions, for their conſtant profeſſion of their Faith in *Chriſt*, and his Miracles; and it cannot be ſuppoſed of Perſons of this Character, that they would invent, and induſtriouſly propagate what they knew to be falſe, if the agreement of ſo many in the ſame deſign had been poſſible: But, if ſo many People could be ſuppoſed capable of forming ſuch a deſign, and of putting on ſuch a falſe Character for the better promoting of it, it is not imaginable that they ſhould be able to continue their Plot, and preſerve their Character ſo long as they did, without betraying themſelves, when they loſt and ſuffered ſo much for carrying on the Cheat, had no proſpect of future ſucceſs anſwerable to their preſent Sufferings, and might have been very well rewarded by

the Enemies of *Chriſtianity* for a ſeaſonable Diſcovery.

But all the Witneſſes of *Chriſt's* Miracles, who afterwards entertained his Goſpel were not of the ſame Character with the former; ſome of them *confeſſed him with their Mouth, but in their Works denied him*; they acknowledged his Authority, and admired his Doctrine; but being *led away by their Luſts*, or diſtracted *by the Cares of the World*, they continued ſtill in their Sins, and never lived up to thoſe holy Rules he preſcribed: Theſe who never felt the power of the Chriſtian Religion, could never be ſo concerned for the Intereſts of it, as conſtantly to vouch and maintain an unprofitable Lye in its defence; when 'tis very probable they might have had eaſier Conſciences and better Fortunes for diſproving the Pretences it was built upon: Others of them *made Shipwrack of their Faith*, and *turn'd again unto thoſe beggarly Elements* or *Idols they were freed from*, neither can theſe be ſuſpected of juſtifying what they knew to be falſe in behalf of a Religion they had forſaken: 'Tis more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, had they been privy to any deceit,

ceit, that they would have been very zealous in the diſcovery of it.

Then as to thoſe who *rejected the Authority and Doctrine of Chriſt*, and continued in the Religion they were at firſt Educated in, notwithſtanding all the Miracles they ſaw; who, as we find by the Hiſtory of the Goſpel, were frequently reproached by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* for their Infidelity, and obſtinate adherence to the Religion and Traditions of their Fathers; the greateſt part of whom, and thoſe Perſons of the greateſt Dignity, Authority and Learning among them, made it their buſineſs to Perſecute *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, and all that profeſſed the *Chriſtian Religion:* 'Tis plainly as impoſſible to imagine that Perſons of this Character ſhould agree to own the truth of *Chriſt's Miracles*, which they knew to be falſe, as that honeſt ſincere Chriſtians who *abhorred a Lye*, and were throughly perſwaded Eternal Miſery was the certain Puniſhment of Lying, ſhould conſpire to deceive the World, by contriving, ſpreading, and continually ſupporting, what they were ſure was the groſſeſt Cheat imaginable.

But, without conſidering the Characters of the Witneſſes, *the Manner* and *Circumſtances* in which they firſt gave Teſtimony to the truth of *Chriſt's Miracles*, makes a *confederacy to deceive* utterly impoſſible: For in many Inſtances of Publick Miracles in the *New Teſtament*, we find that, upon the ſight of ſomething done by *Jeſus Chriſt*, the whole Multitude of Spectators immediately declared their Belief and Admiration by openly glorifying God, or expreſſing their Wonder to one another: So that it plainly appears from hence, that they were all ſeverally convinced of the truth and wonderfulneſs of what they ſaw before they could know one anothers Minds concerning it, and therefore the agreement of their Teſtimony could not be the effect of any antecedent concert among themſelves.

Thus have I evidently proved the truth of the *Publick Miracles of Jeſus Chriſt*; and whatever has been ſaid upon this Subject will hold with the ſame, or rather greater degrees of certainty, concerning the *Publick Miracles of the firſt Apoſtles* and *Diſciples of Chriſt*, who received that Power immediately from their Maſter; and of *all other Chriſtian Believers* to whom th:

the ſame Gifts were conveyed by their Hands: For the Signs and Wonders Recorded to have been done by any of them were as *eaſily known* and diſtinguiſhed by vulgar Senſes and Capacities as thoſe of *Chriſt*; *the Characters and Circumſtances of the Witneſſes*, ſo far as concerns the credibility of their Teſtimony, was very near the ſame: But the *number* of thoſe, who by an intimate conſciouſneſs of their own Power knew they performed ſuch Works, of thoſe who felt the Effects of this Miraculous Power in themſelves, and of thoſe who ſaw the External Signs and Appearances of it in the Facts that were done, was very far greater than in the former Caſe; and the impoſſibility of a general agreement to deceive, more manifeſt here than there; and conſequently the truth of all theſe Facts is as evident as that of the *other* before proved.

As to the more *Private Miracles* done by *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf in the preſence of his Diſciples only, and the Signs and Wonders imployed by ſome *other Power* for the manifeſtation of *Chriſt* to a few choſen Perſons, we have theſe reaſons to believe them true.

The

The Facts were of the ſame nature, and as eaſy to be known and diſcerned as the other before mentioned; the ſeveral Witneſſes of theſe things which happen'd at ſeveral times, taken altogether, were a great many, which makes an agreement of them all to deceive, and a conſtant invincible Perſeverance in a Cheat very difficult to imagine; the Characters of them, as far as appears from the Hiſtory of the *New Teſtament*, were ſuch as leave no room to ſuſpect the Fidelity of their Relation; for they are all of them, the Apoſtles and firſt Diſciples eſpecially who are principally concern'd in the preſent Cauſe, repreſented as honeſt, ſincere, undeſigning Perſons, *that feared God* and loved Mankind; that were free from Pride and Vanity; and were ſo far from ſeeking their own Intereſt or Advancement in this World, that they were *deſpiſed*, and *ſet at nought*, and *evilly intreated* whereever they came, and *were, as to this Life, of all Men moſt miſerable*, for conſtantly aſſerting the truth of the *Reſurrection* and *Aſcention of Chriſt*, and ſuch other Facts now in queſtion; all which they were as firmly perſwaded of, as of any of the *Publick Miracles of Jeſus Crriſt*; and

ſeveral

ſeveral of them they Preach'd up as more neceſſary and impottant to be believed.

Beſides all this, many of theſe Miraculous Facts, which were fully diſcovered only to a few, were accompanied with ſeveral Circumſtances more publickly known, with which they have ſo near, and almoſt neceſſary a connexion, that 'tis very difficult to imagine theſe *Circumſtances* ſhould be true, and not the *principal Facts* alſo; as will eaſily appear from the Inſtance of the *Reſurrection* of *Chriſt*.

In the account of which wonderful Fact we find, that it was known to the *Chief Prieſts* and *Phariſees* among the *Jews* that *Chriſt* had *ſaid*, *while he was yet alive*, *after three Days I will riſe again*; for which reaſon they make Application to *Pilate* to ſecure his Sepulchre, that *his Diſciples might not come* and *ſteal him away by Night*, and take occaſion from thence to give out *he was riſen from the Dead*. *The Sepulchre* was accordingly *made ſure* by rolling a *great Stone* to the Door of it, *by Sealing the Stone* and *ſetting a Watch*: But 'tis further ſaid that, at the time appointed and foretold for the riſing of *Chriſt*, *there was a great Earthquake*, and that then *the Angel of the*

Lord

Lord deſcended from Heaven, and rolled back the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre, *and ſat upon it*; *that his Countenance was like Lightning and his Raiment White as Snow*; that the *Keepers* ſaw all theſe things, and, *for fear* of the Angel, *did ſhake and became as dead Men*: Afterwards we read that *ſome of the Watch came into the City and ſhewed unto the Chief Prieſts all the things that were done*; that the Chief Prieſts *when they were Aſſembled with the Elders, and had taken Counſel, gave large Money to the Souldiers*, to ſay, *his Diſciples came by Night and ſtole him away while they Slept*; which the Souldiers accordingly did, upon their Promiſe *to perſwade the Governour if it ſhould come to his Ears, and ſecure them.*

Now if all theſe Circumſtances were true, for the truth of all which *the Chief Prieſts, Phariſees* and *Elders, Pilate*, and *the Souldiers* that watch'd the Sepulchre of *Chriſt*, are cited as Witneſſes, then is it certain that the Body of *Chriſt* was removed out of the Sepulchre by an extraordinary Power, agreeable to his own Prediction: The belief of which will render all the after-Accounts of *Chriſt* very eaſie and probable, and the ſincerity of the Witneſſes that relate them will take

take away all manner of doubt concerning the truth of them.

Which Sincerity of the Witneſſes is manifeſt, not only from the conſtant ſettled Character of the Men, but from a great many peculiar Circumſtances in the Relation it ſelf that is given of this great and wonderful Event: Such as were the Ignorance of the *Diſciples of Chriſt*, who *knew not the Scripture that he muſt riſe again from the Dead*; their Fear aud Flight when he was taken; their Sorrow and Diſconſolate Diſpair of ſeeing *Iſrael Redeemed by him* after he was Dead, as *they truſted* before *it ſhould*; their Amazement and Aſtoniſhment, Terrour and Trembling when he appeared to any of them; the Trouble and Diſtruſt ſome of them ſhewed upon his diſcovering himſelf to them; the ſuſpence of others from believing by reaſon of their *Joy* and *Wonder*; the difficulty of believing and *hardneſs of Heart* in all of them, and particularly in *Thomas*, (who believed not them that had ſeen him after he was riſen) till they were convinced by the Teſtimony of their own Senſes: All which Paſſions are expreſſed in ſuch a manner, as none but honeſt ſincere Perſons,

ſons, who were throughly perſwaded of the truth of things, were capable of expreſſing.

Several other Circumſtances might be alledged, and all of them further inlarged upon, to confirm the truth of what I have advanced; and the like might be done in many other Facts beſides that of the *Reſurrection*, as may be plainly ſeen in the Goſpel-account of them; but this ſingle Inſtance is ſufficient to ſhew that the truth uf the *Private Miracles of Chriſt*, is ſupported by the *Publick Circumſtances* with which they were attended, as well as by the *Characters of the Witneſſes* that related them.

But the greateſt Confirmation of the Truth of all theſe Private Miracles of *Chriſt*, and the chief Ground upon which the firſt Chriſtians believed them, was the *Power of working New Miracles*, which was ſo manifeſtly and remarkably upon all occaſions exerciſed by the Relatours and Publiſhers of them. *The Publick Miracles of Chriſt* were ſuch, and ſo well known and atteſted as made it very eaſie to believe he might do the like, or as great, or greater *privately*, in the preſence of a few: And the *publick Miracles of the*

Apoſtles

Apoſtles and Diſciples of Chriſt, took away all Suſpicion of their forging *privates ones* done by their Maſter; that extraordinary Power they were indued with, being reckoned a certain Argument of the *Divine Favour* to them, and conſequently of their extraordinary Piety and Holineſs, which are Characters utterly inconſiſtent with all Falſhood and Lying Pretences.

But, if notwithſtanding this wonderful Power and Appearance of *Divine* Aid, they were Perſons of a contrary Character, and otherwiſe aſſiſted; then is it utterly inconceivable they ſhould be ſo much concerned to invent and propagate, and ſo earneſt to perſuade all People to believe what only made for the Honour of another, at the ſame time they knew it to be *falſe*; when they might better have ſerved their own ends, whatever they were, in concealing it from the World, if it had been *true*. For, whatever farther Deſigns they had, 'tis certain they intended to have their own Miracles believed in order to compaſs them; and they could not poſſibly hope to make People believe *they* work'd Miracles *openly* and *publickly* in their preſence,

ſence, by vouching ſome done by *another*, which they themſelves *only* were Witneſſes of: The difficulty of believing *theſe* was likelier to leſſen than increaſe the Credibility of *their own*, the unconteſted certainty of which, was the chief Thing that made the *other* believed.

This is ſufficient to eſtabliſh the *private Miracles of Chriſt*.

Whatever Miracles are Recorded as done by the *firſt Apoſtles* and *Diſciples of Chriſt*, or any *other Chriſtian Believers* afterwards *privately* in the preſence of a few; the *Characters* and *publick Miracles* of the Perſons that did them, are, to thoſe who were not Witneſſes of them, a ſufficient Warrant for the Truth of their Relation, or of any other Account not contradicted by them: And thoſe few, who were *Witneſſes*, had a more Senſible Conviction *themſelves*, and were a further ſecurity for the Truth of the Relation of them to *others*.

What hath been ſaid of the *Miracles*, will hold in like manner of the *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Teſtament*; only there is one Thing to be obſerved, which is peculiar to *Prophecies*, and which makes the

the proof of them ſomewhat different from that of *Miracles*; though, I think, in no reſpect leſs, but in ſome inſtances rather greater.

This peculiar Character of Prophecies is, that every Prophecy conſiſts of two Parts, a *Prediction* and an *Accompliſhment*, which are commonly at ſome diſtance from one another; from whence it happens, that the ſame Perſons who are Witneſſes of the one, may not be ſo of the other, which ſeems to take off ſomething from the Credibility of the whole Fact, that often depending upon the Agreement of ſeveral Perſons, who were at different times Witneſſes to ſeveral parts of it: But then, on the other hand, if we conſider the *Prediction* only, as well Atteſted and Recorded in Writing before the appointed time of its *Accompliſhment*, a *Prophecy* will have this advantage of a *Miracle*, that *more* People may have read the Prediction in Writing than can poſſibly be Witneſſes of a Miracle at the time when 'tis done, and conſequently, there may be often-times more Witneſſes of the Accompliſhment of a Prophecy than of the Performance of a Miracle; foraſmuch as things Propheſied of are

commonly Events of ſuch a nature as have a *more fixt and continued Exiſtence*, and *a much wider compaſs of Appearance* than Miracles have: And beſides this, for a Perſon acquainted with the Prediction, to be ſatisfied of the Accompliſhment, 'tis ſufficient to know ſuch an Event is any ways come to paſs, without knowing any thing of the Power by which it was done, or perceiving any thing extraordinary or unuſual in the manner of its happening.

Thus for Example, the *Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and Extirpation of the Jewiſh Nation*, were Events of a wider and more laſting Cognizance than *Healing a Sick*, or *Raiſing a Dead Man*; and a Perſon who knew the former were foretold by reading the Prediction in Writing, might be more eaſily and certainly ſatisfied of the truth of their Accompliſhment, than one who was not an actual Spectator of the other Facts, could be of the truth of them: For to be aſſured that that Prediction was fulfilled, and that therefore it was a true Prophecy 'twas enough to know that *Jeruſalem* was Deſtroyed, and the *Jewiſh* People driven out of their Country, whatever way this came about;

bout; but to know that ſuch a Man was Well, or ſuch another Alive, or that the one had been Sick, and the other to all appearance Dead, is not ſufficient to convince a Man of the truth of the *Miracle* in either caſe; and a Perſon who did not ſee the Manner and Circumſtances in which each of theſe Facts was done, can receive no aſſurance of them afterwards, but from the Teſtimony of others; becauſe there are no viſible Remains and Footſteps of the Miracle left after the Action is over; whereas, in the other Inſtance of *Prophecy*, the Event is conſtantly the ſame it was at firſt, and equally convincing at all times to every one that will take the pains to ſatisfie himſelf.

And further, if a conſiderable time intervene between the *Prediction* and the *Accompliſhment*, and the Record of the *Prediction* was very publick before the thing happen'd, the Perſons who live after the *Accompliſhment*, and ſo were immediate Witneſſes of neither part of the Prophecy, may be more eaſily and fully ſatisfied of the truth of a *particular Prophecy*, than of a *particular Miracle*, they were not Witneſſes of themſelves; becauſe *both the Prediction* and the *Accom-*

pliſhment being *Common Facts*, conſidered in themſelves, without any relation to one another, are leſs liable to ſuſpicion than *unuſual Events* of a more ſurpriſing Nature, and the truth of the *latter Fact* being often certainly cognizable at any time of inquiry, there is ſo much time ſuppoſed between *this Accompliſhment* and the *former Prediction*, that 'tis eaſie to find out whether *that* really happened out before *this*, which is all that is required for the truth of the *whole Prophecy*; the *extraordinary nature* of which ariſes from the *compariſon of both* together in order to know the *reaſon of their Connexion*, and not from any thing in the Facts themſelves ſeverally conſidered, as it does in Miracles, where the *Facts* themſelves are wonderful, without any conſideration of the *Cauſes* or *Occaſions* of them.

Thus are the *firſt Chriſtian Miracles* and *Prophecies* related and atteſted: Theſe are the Grounds and Reaſons upon which they were believed; and this is the ſumm of all the Evidence that is brought for them; which is capable of being illuſtrated and confirm'd by a vaſt variety of *particular Obſervations*; but my intended Method

Method not allowing me to make ſuch Inlargments, I ſhall conclude the Proof I was upon with this *General Reflexion.*

From the account that is given in the *New Teſtament* of the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* there Recorded, and of the manner of *Preaching the Goſpel*, and *Converting People to the Chriſtian Religion*, it plainly appears that the firſt and principal Motive upon which any Perſons believed in *Chriſt*, and imbraced the Doctrine taught by him and his *Apoſtles*, was ſome *Miracle* they *themſelves* were actual Witneſſes of; for Miracles were then ſo common every where, that there was hardly any Chriſtian, even among the *Gentile* Converts, for above Threeſcore Years after the Promulgation of the Goſpel by *Chriſt*, but was *himſelf* a Witneſs of ſome Miracle wrought by others: So that, tho' they might be further confirm'd in the belief of what was taught them by the *Characters* of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; the *Teſtimony* of *Jewiſh Chriſtians*, who, upon the ſeveral Perſecutions in *Jeruſalem* and all *Judea*, were ſcattered and diſperſed among the *Gentiles* of all Nations; and the *Accompliſhment of Prophecies* written in the Books of the *Old* and *New Teſta-*

ment, which they knew to have been written before the Events happen'd; yet the firſt and chief ground of their aſſent to the Miracles and Doctrines of the Goſpel was ſome Miraculous Power they had *themſelves* been Witneſſes of.

When therefore we conſider the vaſt number of Converts that were made to Chriſtianity in the firſt Age of the Goſpel, and conſequently the vaſt Multitude of *ſeeming Miracles* that muſt have been continually wrought for their Converſion in all Places, together with the ſteady and invincible Perſeverance of Chriſtians in *the Faith*, notwithſtanding all the variety of Sufferings they indured for believing, 'tis impoſſible to imagine there ſhould be a whole Age of *Deluſion* and *Deceit*; that there ſhould be ſuch a long continued train and ſeries of *meer empty Appearances*, without any *reality* under them; which produced ſuch *real* Effects, as remain till this Day; and Effects of ſuch an extraordinory nature, as in a very ſhort time gave a new turn to the whole Scheme of Affairs in the moſt conſiderable part of the World.

Since therefore *all* the *common Matters of Fact* mentioned in the Hiſtory of the Goſpel,

Goſpel, as we find it delivered in the *New Teſtament*, are *true*, as I have ſhewed before; and conſequently, *that* among the reſt, that the *Miracles* Recorded in the *New Teſtament were believed*, according to the relation there given of them; it neceſſarily follows from hence, that there were ſuch Facts as thoſe, *in appearance* at leaſt, otherwiſe there could have been no ground for believing them in that manner as 'tis ſaid they were believed; and if there were all thoſe *appearances* of ſomething done, I ſhall take it for granted, for the reaſon juſt before given, that there were ſo many *true real Facts*.

And if the *Miracles* are allowed to be *real*, the *Prophecies* muſt be ſo too, as being freer from all ſuſpicion of *wrong appearance*.

3. The next ſtep I am to make in the proof of the *Chriſtian Hiſtory*, is to ſhew, that what is ſaid in the *New Teſtament* concerning *Divine Aſſiſtance* and *Revelation*, is true.

Now 'tis frequently and poſitively aſſerted there, not only that ſuch and ſuch *Signs* and *Wonders* were wrought; ſuch

Prophecies uttered and fulfilled; and such *Doctrines* preach'd; but that all these things were performed by the immediate *Power* and *Authority of God:* This is every where acknowledg'd and insisted upon by *Christ* and *his Apostles*, and *all that* were concerned in the *Work* and *Ministry of the Gospel.* What they constantly affirm of themselves is, that they were *sent from God*; that they were *authorized* and *ordained by God to Preach the Gospel*; that they were *doing* the *Work of the Lord*; that the *Doctrine* they taught and preached *came from God*; that they *had it by Revelation*; that *God shewed them things to come*; that they *spake by the Spirit of God*; that the *Power they had was from God*; and that *God* was *with them*, continually *assisting* them and *revealing* himself to them.

Whether the Matters of Fact were *really* so as they affirmed, we have no other ways of knowing but these two, *their own Testimony*, and the *nature of the things* said and done by them.

As to *the Testimony* of those who declare all these wonderful things of themselves; their *Condition*, *Character* and *Sufferings* have been considered already, and found to be such as are a sufficient warrant to

secure

ſecure us from any fear or ſuſpicion of their *deſigning to impoſe upon us:* But becauſe they do not require us to believe *their own Witneſs*, but bid us *examine their Works*, and *inquire of their Doctrine*, in order to know whether *they were of God* or not, we will take the Method they have preſcribed us; though I cannot but obſerve by the way, that the Appeal they make, and the Directions they give, for a careful examination of their Pretences, is a very good Argument of their Sincerity, and full aſſurance of the truth of what they pretended to.

But, waving all Obſervations of this kind, I will confine my ſelf to the conſideration of the *nature of the things* ſaid and done by *Chriſt* and his *Diſciples*; and ſhew that they were ſuch as neither *they themſelves who ſaid and did them*, nor *thoſe that ſaw and heard them*, nor *any body elſe* that *is any other way convinced of the truth of the Appearances*, could *be deceived* in thinking they proceeded wholly from *God*.

The Matters to be inquired into, fall under one of theſe Three Heads, *viz. Miracles*, *Prophecies*, and *Doctrines*; concerning which we will inquire firſt whether the

the *Perſons themſelves*, who appeared to be the immediate Authors of them, might not be infallibly ſatisfied, that, whatever of this kind they did or ſaid was from *God alone*, and not at all from their *own Power* or *Skill*.

This is certainly and undeniably *poſſible*, that God *may*, if he ſo pleaſe, *reveal* and diſcover ſomething to a *Man*, which he did not know before, and ſomething, which, without ſuch diſcovery he could not have known at all, or not at that time when he firſt perceived himſelf to know it. He that made us and gave us the capacity of Perception and Underſtanding, may as eaſily, when and howſoever he thinks fit, put into our Minds ſuch thoughts as our own Labour and Induſtry had not yet, or could not have ſupplied us with. There needs no further proof of this to him that believes a *God*.

And, if *God* can reveal any thing to *Man*, 'tis likewiſe as certain that *that Man* to whom ſuch diſcovery is made, may be *undeceivably convinced* that the *Revelation* came from *God*. The ſame *God*, who gave him the faculty of diſcerning betwixt Truth and Falſhood in his acquired knowledge,

knowledge, can enable him to diſtinguiſh as certainly betwixt his *own Attainments* and *Divine Communications:* He may judge that ſuch a thing was revealed to him by *God*, with the ſame Satisfaction and Acquieſcence of Mind, and with the ſame impoſſibility of entertaining a doubt, notwithſtanding all his efforts and endeavours to diſtruſt himſelf, as he judges any other Propoſition is true in which the connexion of the ſimpleſt and moſt known Ideas is irreſiſtibly perceived.

Evidence of Perception is the *only Standard of Truth in all Caſes:* And though ſeveral Men may have been deceived in thinking ſome things were revealed to them by God which were not ſo revealed; this is no more an Argument that a Man *cannot be certain of any Revelation*, than 'tis an Argument for *Univerſal Scepticiſm* that ſome Men have been miſtaken in what they thought *ſelf-evident Propoſitions* and *Demonſtrations*.

But not to enter further into that diſpute, which I ſhall have occaſion to conſider in another place; beſides the certainty that a Man may have that God has revealed himſelf to him, from *immediate conſciouſneſs*, his Faith may be confirm'd,

if any degrees of Evidence can be ſuppoſed wanting, by *External Signs* and *Characters*. God may, if he pleaſe, give a Man ſuch a ſtrong conviction of his Power to do ſuch and ſuch wonderful things, that he may be intirely ſatisfied, without ſo much as a deſire to make any tryal of his Talent; and he may likewiſe manifeſt himſelf to him in ſuch a manner as leaves ſome room for Doubts, but ſuch as muſt needs yeild to further Proofs ordained by God for the removal of them.

Thus, for Inſtance, a Man that is ſtrongly perſwaded God has given him a Power of performing ſuch and ſuch extraordinary things, but has ſome little diſtruſt of himſelf leſt he ſhould miſtake the *Deluſions of his own Fancy* for the *Revelations of God*, when, upon trial, he finds that ſuch things are really perform'd by his Hands, all his doubts vaniſh, and he is throughly confirm'd that both his *Power* and former *Perſwaſion* were from *God*.

This in general muſt be granted, that a Man may take ſuch a certain eſtimate of his own *Capacities*, *Powers* and *Attainments*, that he may be infallibly ſure that he could

could not do or know ſuch a thing of himſelf without ſome other Aſſiſtance; that he did not know ſuch a thing before ſuch a time; that he did not know it then by the help of his Antecedent Knowledge; and that he did not do ſuch a thing by any Power or Force of his own, or by any Skill or Knowledge of the manner how it was done.

That I cannot *now* Cure the Sick, nor Raiſe the Dead, nor Speak the *Syriack* and *Arabick* Tongues, nor tell when the *Jews* ſhall be ſettled in their own Country again, I am as ſure, as 'tis poſſible for me to be, that I can think, or ſpeak, or move: And if I ſhould *hereafter* Cure the Sick, or Raiſe the Dead by the word of my Mouth, if I ſhould ſpeak the *Syriack* and *Arabick* Languages, without reading any Books writ in thoſe Tongues, or hearing them ſpoke, or ſhould foretel the exact time of the Reſtoration of the *Jews*, I ſhould then be alſo fully ſatisfied and aſſured that I did not perform ſuch Works, as curing the Sick, and raiſing the Dead by any Power or Skill of my own; that I did not underſtand ſuch Languages, or know any thing of ſuch an Event before I ſpoke the one and fore-

told

told the other; and that all the knowledge I had acquired before that time, was not ſufficient to make me underſtand thoſe Languages, and that Event, without ſome further and more extraordinary Aſſiſtance, exceeding all my Power and Knowledge. If I am capable of knowing any thing at all of my ſelf, I cannot be miſtaken in theſe things; and the ſame Experience every other Man is alike capable of.

But ſuppoſing *Chriſt* (whom I conſider now only as a Man) and *his Apoſtles* and *Diſciples*, were all ſeverally ſatisfied, by a *certain conſciouſneſs* of their own Power and Knowledge, that the *Miracles* they performed exceeded their *Humane Power*, and the *Prophecies* and *Doctrines* they delivered could not be the Reſults and Products of their antecedent Knowledge, how could they be aſſured that *God* was the ſole Author of them all, and not ſome *other Being* of Superiour Order to Men? Why the very ſame way they were convinced that *they themſelves* were not.

God who made them after ſuch a manner that they could by *immediate conſciouſneſs* perceive that ſuch a thing did not proceed from *themſelves*, could enable them

them in like manner to judge that ſuch a thing did proceed from *God only*, and not from any other Being.

'Tis true indeed there may be, and we have ſeveral reaſons to believe there are other Beings, beſides *God*, of a Superiour Nature to Man; who 'tis probable may, and do, by ſome *inviſible unperceivable way* act upon the Mind of Man, as we are ſure Men act upon one another by the means of *External ſenſible Signs*; but, if God ſo pleaſe, we may diſtinguiſh as truly and certainly betwixt the *Revelations of God* and the *Suggeſtions of other Spirits*, as we can betwixt the thoughts ariſing within us from *our ſelves*, and thoſe raiſed in us by *other Men* upon occaſion of External Signs. And though ſome may have miſtaken the *Suggeſtions of other Spirits* for the *Voice of God*, there is no more reaſon from hence for thoſe who have had *true Revelations* to doubt of the certainty of them, than there is for me to diſtruſt the *evidence of my own Perceptions*, when I judge ſuch Ideas were occaſioned in me by the real Voice and Preſence of other Men, becauſe ſome have imagined they heard ſuch and ſuch Words ſpoke by ſuch Perſons, when theſe Ideas came from their

their own Minds only, without any External Occaſions to execute them.

From all which it neceſſarily follows, that *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* might be *infallibly convinced* that the *Signs* and *Wonders* they wrought were done by the *Power of God*; that the *knowledge of future Events* was communicated to them *by God*; and that the *Doctrines* they preached were delivered to them *by God*: All this, I ſay, they might be infallibly convinced of by an *immediate Conſciouſneſs*, not only of *their own Diſability* to do and ſay ſuch things of themſelves, without the aſſiſtance of ſome higher Power; but of *God's expreſs Revelation* of himſelf to them in all theſe Inſtances.

Which ſort of Evidence and Satisfaction, though it reaches no further than the *Perſons themſelves* who pretend to have received any Revelation from God, yet is it of great uſe for the Conviction of *others*, by making way for ſuch Proofs as are proper to that end, and which will not have any Force at all without it.

For, except it be ſuppoſed that *Divine Revelation* is *poſſible*, and that the Perſon to whom the Revelation is made may be *certain* of it, 'tis in vain to perſwade any

any Man that he is obliged to believe and do ſuch and ſuch things, becauſe they were revealed by God: For, if Revelation be impoſſible, 'tis plainly abſurd to make that a foundation either of Faith or Obedience; and, if Revelation be poſſible; but no Man can be certain when any thing is revealed to him, and when not; there can be no Arguments found to convince another of the truth of a Revelation, which the Perſon that pretends to it cannot be ſatisfied of himſelf.

But, both theſe things being proved, we are in the next place to examine how *other People* can be ſatisfied that *God* revealed himſelf to *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*.

Now 'tis plain by the Account before given, that *they themſelves* might be intirely ſatisfied by the *immediate aſſurance of their own Minds*, that God had given them a Power of ſaying and doing ſuch things, and had made ſuch things actually preſent to their Minds as could proceed from *him only*, and from *no other Being*: But, except they communicated what was given and revealed to them by *External Signs*, 'tis very plain that the Revelation could not be known to, or concern any

other but *themſelves*; and therefore the only way that *others* have of knowing the truth of *the Chriſtian Revelation*, is from the *External Signs* and *Appearances* by which it was communicated to them from thoſe who firſt received it; which, as has been before obſerved, may be conſidered under the ſtyle of *Miracles*, *Prophecies*, and *Doctrines*: So that, if it can be proved that the Miracles, Prophecies, and Doctrines, Recorded in the *New Teſtament*, did proceed *from God*, this is ſufficient to convince us that *God* has ſpoken to us by *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*; and that we are obliged to believe and obey the *Chriſtian Religion*, as delivered to us by *Divine Revelation* and *Authority*.

The proof I ſhall give of this great and concerning Point, ſhall conſiſt of theſe three parts.

Firſt, I will indeavour to ſhew, that *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*, conſidered as *meer Men*, unaſſiſted by any higher Power, could not be the Authors of the Miracles, Prophecies, and Doctrines Recorded in the *New Teſtament*.

Secondly,

Secondly, I will make it appear, not only that *God might* be the Author of them, but that they have such *certain* Marks and Characters of *Divinity* upon them, that we cannot be mistaken in attributing them to God.

Thirdly, I will prove that 'tis very improper and absurd to ascribe these things to *Evil Spirits*.

First, Then I am to shew, that *Christ* and *his Apostles*, could not by any *Humane* Skill or Power be the Authors of those wonderful things said and done by their Ministry.

'Tis said of *Christ*, that *he spake as never Man spake*; and he says of himself, that he did those things among the *Jews* that *Man never did*; which he uses as an Argument to prove their unbelief in him inexcusable: The plain meaning of both which Phrases here is, not only that no Man *could* of himself speak like *Christ*, or perform such things as he did, but that no Man had ever spake like him, or done what he did, however assisted by any other Power. This appears from several other

Paſſages in the *New Teſtament*, and particularly from *Chriſt*'s own Argument againſt the *Jews:* For he knew that they believed in *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, and were perſwaded of the truth of all the *Miracles* Recorded in the *Old Teſtament*; and therefore he did not think it ſufficient for *them* to believe in him for the ſake of his Works, though he had done what no Man, without *Divine Aſſiſtance*, was able to do, if he had not alſo done greater things than *Moſes*, or any other Perſon Divinely aſſiſted, had done before. So much was neceſſary to convince the *Jews*, and ſuperſede a *former Revelation*; but for the truth of *Revelation in general*, both *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* ſeem to make this the only Teſt, that what they ſaid and did exceeded the Power and Wiſdom of *Men*; from whence they immediately concluded that therefore it was from *God*. If this then be the Standard we are to judge of *Revelation* by, 'twill be eaſily made out that neither the *Miracles*, *Prophecies*, nor *Doctrines* of the *New Teſtament*, could be from *Men*, and therefore that they came from *God* who aſſiſted and revealed himſelf to thoſe Men that appeared to be the Authors of them.

It

It has been obſerved already that a Man may take ſuch a certain eſtimate of his *own* Capacities and Powers, and of his Preſent ſtock of Knowledge, as to be infallibly ſure that he *cannot do* or *know* ſuch and ſuch things, either *at all*, or not *after ſuch a manner*. And, if we know any thing certain of the nature of *Man in general*, we may confidently affirm that we are made and faſhioned with ſuch reſemblance to one another, that, notwithſtanding the great variety and diſproportion of Faculties and Attainments obſervable among us, a Man may be able, by what he knows of himſelf, ſo far to determine the Limits of *Humane* Force and Skill, as to be firmly aſſured ſuch and ſuch things cannot poſſibly lye within the reach and comprehenſion of *meer Man*, unaſſiſted by any other Being.

Thus for Example, to uſe the former Inſtances, we are fully and intirely aſſured that no Man whatſoever, barely by his *own* Power, without the Aſſiſtance or Application of any other Being, can Cure the Sick, or Raiſe the Dead, or Speak a Language he knew nothing of juſt before he ſpake it, or foretell ſuch Events as that of the Reſtoration of the *Jews*.

We may likewise be as fully sure that Persons of such an Education and Course of Life could not possibly, *of themselves*, by the force of their own Capacities and Acquisitions, conceive, speak, write or do such and such things, in such a particular way and manner as we can suppose, or may actually find.

Whoever therefore believes the *Miracles*, *Prophecies* and *Doctrines* of *Christ*, and *his Apostles*, according to the History given of them in the *New Testament*, must have this assurance, that if *these Matters of Fact* were so as they are there delivered, 'tis impossible that *those Men* should be the Authors of them, as I shall shew more particularly by considering them apart.

To begin with *Prophecies*, which have been always reckoned the most unexceptionable Testimonies of an Intelligence exceeding *Humane* Knowledge: If the *Books of the Old Testament* were writ long before *Christ* came into the World; and all those Passages out of them, which we find applied to *Christ*, and the Dispensation of the Gospel in the *New Testament*, had a designed relation to those Events they are there applied to; 'tis impossible

to imagine that either the *Prediction* or *Accompliſhment* of them was the effect of meer *Humane* Knowledge and Power.

Such a *multitude* and *variety* of *ſurprizing* Events, never before heard of in the World, that had no manner of perceivable connexion with the ſtate of things when they were foretold, nor indeed at any other time before they happened, could not, by any force of *Humane* Wiſdom, be ſo *particularly* and *circumſtantially* foreknown.

Neither can it be ſuppoſed that *Chriſt* made all thoſe Relations in the *Old Teſtament* paſs for Prophecies by an Arbitrary Application of them to ſuch Events, as were in his own Power to bring about in ſuch a manner, as he thought would bear the neareſt reſemblance to thoſe accounts of things he found already written; for 'twas manifeſtly impoſſible for *Chriſt* to order and contrive the time, place and manner of his Birth, and all the other Circumſtances which attended his coming into the World; and yet theſe things are as particularly and remarkably expreſſed in the Writings of the *Old Teſtament*, as any other matters whatſoever applied by *Chriſt* to himſelf; and as certainly

believed by the *Jews* to belong to *the Meſſiah*, before the Pretenſions of *Jeſus Chriſt* were heard of, as any other Prophecies that were ever thought by them to concern him.

If the *Prophecies* cited out of the *Scriptures* of the *Jews* relating to the Death, Reſurrection and Aſcention of *Chriſt*, the Miſſion of the *Holy Spirit*, Propagation of the *Goſpel*, Rejection of the *Jews*, and Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the ſucceſs and continuance of the *Chriſtian Religion* among the *Gentiles* were allowed by the *Jews* of that time to belong to the *Meſſiah*, when *Chriſt* applied them to himſelf, then are they certain Arguments of a knowledge in the *Prophets* who uttered them exceeding all *Humane* Sagacity and Foreſight: But if none of the *Jews* underſtood them in that ſence, or would grant the Paſſages referred to, to be Prophetical of any thing, then muſt the Application of them to ſuch and ſuch future Events by *Chriſt* be reckoned as new diſtinct Prophecies, uttered firſt by *himſelf*, and ſo they will be equal proofs of an extraordinary and more than *Humane* Knowledge in *Chriſt*; becauſe the Events foretold were ſuch as 'twas plainly impoſſible for

Man

Man to foreſee or accompliſh by his own Power.

For, not to mention the vaſt unlikelihood there was, according to all Humane Meaſures of Judging, that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be utterly deſtroyed, and the whole Nation of the *Jews* rooted out, ſo ſoon after the time it was foretold this ſhould happen, and in that very manner in which the whole Fact ſtood deſcribed; not to inſiſt upon all the amazing Difficulties that might be urged againſt the ſucceſs of the *Goſpel*, which render'd it, in all *Humane Appearance*, a thing impracticable that *Chriſtian Religion* ſhould ſo mightily and ſuddenly prevail and ſpread by ſuch means and inſtruments as is foretold it ſhould be propagated by: Waving, I ſay, all Reflexions of this nature that might be made, which are a great many, this muſt certainly be granted, that 'twas utterly impoſſible for *Chriſt* by any *Humane* Skill or Wiſdom to know that he ſhould riſe again, and aſcend into Heaven, and that afterwards his *Apoſtles* ſhould receive ſuch Knowledge, Courage and Power, as to Preach his Goſpel boldly, indure Afflictions patiently, confirm their Doctrine by many Signs and Wonders,

ders, and Convert great Multitudes to the Chriſtian Faith. And if it was impoſſible for him *of himſelf* to *know* all theſe things, it muſt be accounted much more impoſſible for him to *effect* and *accompliſh* them by his own Power.

But, if it be ſaid that all theſe great and wonderful Events were really foretold in the *Old Teſtament*, though ſo darkly and obſcurely expreſt, that no Man, before *Chriſt*, underſtood the method and way of applying them right, whence had *he* the Art and Skill of *Interpretation*? This is as great a Mark and Character of an extraordinary and more than *Humane* Wiſdom, as *Propheſying* it ſelf would be: But then, beſides this wonderful Skill of *Interpreting*, he muſt be allowed the Talent of *Propheſying* too, by reaſon of ſeveral new Circumſtances and Particulars relating to thoſe great Events, which are plainly and expreſly mentioned by *Chriſt*, and cannot be deduced from any Paſſages of the *Old Teſtament*; as will eaſily appear upon a Compariſon of the ſeveral *Predictions of Chriſt*, and *the ancient Prophecies* of the ſame Events referred to by him: Which Particulars foretold by *Chriſt himſelf*, and others afterwards by ſome

ſome of *his Diſciples* and *Believers* are moſt of them ſuch as could not be foreſeen by any Labour, Art, or Force of *Humane* Underſtanding; becauſe they are ſuch Matters of Fact as before they did actually happen, no Man, without an *over-ruling Conviction* could poſſibly perſwade himſelf to believe would ever happen at all, much leſs to expect that others ſhould believe they would upon his Teſtimony.

From hence it evidently appears that moſt of the *Prophecies* Recorded in the *Old* and *New Teſtament* relating to *Chriſt*, and *his Goſpel* muſt be the reſults of ſome *Higher Knowledge* than that of *Man*, becauſe they are ſuch as cannot poſſibly be accounted meer *lucky Conjectures*, nor *skilful Prognoſticks* grounded upon the neceſſary connexion and dependance of *Natural* Cauſes and Effects; which are all the ways of foretelling things that *Men* are capable of.

'Tis true indeed ſome *general common* Events, may ſometimes by *a luckly turn of imagination* be foretold; ſuch as Life or Death, Peace or War, Proſperity or Adverſity, and the like; and therefore had *Chriſt* ſpake no other Prophecies but ſuch as theſe

that

that *Peter ſhould be Crucified*, and *John ſhould out live the reſt of the Apoſtles*; there might have been ſome ground to think them *caſual conjectural* Predictions; though a great many true Predictions even of this nature, without one miſtaken gueſs, could not with any colour of reaſon or probability have been attributed to *chance*.

Several other Events likewiſe there are, which by a skill in this or that part of Knowledge, and by an immediate information concerning ſeveral antecedent Circumſtances may be foretold: Thus does an Aſtronomer foretel an Eclipſe, a Phyſician the Death of ſome particular Perſon, a Politician a National Calamity or Advantage; and thus does a Wiſe Man underſtand how ſuch a Perſon, whoſe Temper and Principles he is well acquainted with, will behave himſelf upon ſuch an occaſion; and many other the like Inſtances might be given. But the *Prophecies* of *Chriſt* and other *Ancient Prophets* before him concerning the whole Diſpenſation of the Goſpel could not poſſibly be meer *Gueſſes* and *Conjectures*; becauſe the things foretold were, moſt of them, ſuch as the Perſons who foretold them had never ſeen or heard of any Inſtances of before,

fore, and ſo could have nothing to lead or determine their thoughts that way: And if the Ideas of ſuch Facts could be ſuppoſed to have entered their Minds, they could not have *poſitively* and *confidently* affirmed that thoſe Facts would really happen, without thinking it probable that they might ſo happen; and 'tis impoſſible that any Men in their ſenſes ſhould look upon ſuch Events as probable, which they had had no manner of experience of before, without a deep inſight into the nature and reaſons of things, by which they were enabled to ſee ſuch a train and connexion of Cauſes as would very likely produce ſuch Effects.

But this cannot be pretended in the caſe before us, for ſeveral reaſons.

For firſt of all our Knowledge of *Nature* and the *Cauſes* of things, is ſo very ſcanty and imperfect, that hardly any thing was ever foreknown by Man without an antecedent experience of ſomething of the ſame kind or nature that had already happen'd: Some Eclipſes were obſerved before any were foretold, ſuch a complexion of Symptoms had actually proved fatal before it was known to be a certain cauſe or ſign of approaching Death,

Death, and the like will hold in all other Inſtances of *Humane Prediction*, by virtue of any *natural* or *acquired* Knowledge.

Beſides, in none of theſe caſes can any particular Event be foreſeen by the moſt certain comprehenſion of all the Cauſes producing it, without a true and particular information concerning the punctual and determinate Exiſtence of thoſe Cauſes, and all the Circumſtances requiſite to make their Influence effectual. If a Man be never ſo well acquainted with the Motions and Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies, he cannot tell that an Eclipſe will happen at ſuch a time without knowing the particular poſition of the Bodies contributing to an Eclipſe at that time; nor can a Phyſician, by all his skill in the frame and ſtructure of Humane Bodies foretel that ſuch a particular Man, whoſe Conſtitution and Circumſtances of Health he knows nothing of, ſhall at ſuch a determinate time dye or recover of ſuch a Diſeaſe.

But, ſuppoſing a Man knew the whole Oeconomy of the *Corporeal* World, was acquainted with all the Laws of *Motion*, and ſaw the neceſſary dependance of all the Parts of *Matter* upon one another, he could

could not be enabled from hence to foretel such things which depended upon the free Resolutions and Determinations of *Intellectual Beings*; nor is it possible for us, by what we know of the Temper and Dispositions of all the Persons we converse with, to foretel what Men will Live, and what particular Actions will be done by them at a great distance from us. The connexion of *all Humane Actions* is not discoverable from the clearest view we can have of *Humane Nature*, and all the Principles and Motives Men act upon.

Now for all these reasons, 'tis impossible that those great and wonderful Events foretold by *Christ* and the *Ancient Prophets*, which we find mentioned in the *New Testament*, could be foretold by any *Humane Skill* or *Learning*, the same way that we have seen other natural Truths Predicted.

For several of them, 'tis plain, were such as the Prophets had never seen or heard of any Instances of before: As for Example, that a Person should come down from Heaven to save Mankind from their Sins; that *a Virgin should conceive & bear a Son, &c.* And indeed all those Facts we call *Miraculous*, may be referred to this Head; for, tho'

tho' ſome of the ſame, or alike kind were known to have happen'd before, yet the Prophets, who knew and believed them, look'd upon them as exceeding all *Humane* Power and Cognizance, and therefore could not foreſee the like by any ordinary Natural way of Knowledge, becauſe they had never had any Experience of ſuch things happening according to the *ordinary* courſe of Things.

Several of the Matters propheſied of, if they had depended upon *certain neceſſary Cauſes*, and that dependance had been very well known to the Prophets, yet they could not have been foretold by them, for want of knowing ſome particular Circumſtances, which muſt concurr to their Exiſtence: Thus, for inſtance, ſuppoſing a Man was able, by his extraordinary Skill in Nature, to explain how a *Virgin might conceive*, or *the Dead riſe*, the *Lame be made to walk*, and *the Sick be cured*; he could not by the means of this Knowlede, foretell that, at ſuch a certain time hereafter, ſuch Facts as theſe ſhould happen, becauſe he could not underſtand whe ther the State and Diſpoſition of Things, at that time, would certainly be ſuch that thoſe Facts muſt enſue.

But

But theſe Reaſons chiefly concern *corporeal* Agents: Whereas, beſides the difficulties ariſing from hence, all the Prophecies we are concerned to defend could not be fulfilled, without the concurrence of an infinite variety of *Humane Actions*, which were not the Reſults of irreſiſtible Motives when they were done; nor was the Application of any Motives for the doing of them, nor even the Exiſtence of the Perſons that did them, neceſſary.

That ſuch a Perſon as *Chriſt* ſhould at ſuch a Time and Place be Born, depended upon Ten Thouſand Millions of the moſt contingent Determinations Humane Nature was ever ſenſible of; which muſt all happen in ſucha manner, betwixt the time of the *Propheſy* and the *Completion*, or elſe the Event had never been: And the like might be ſhewn in all the other Chriſtian Facts, and Events, propheſied of.

All which is abundantly ſufficient to prove, that the *Prophecies* mentioned in the *New Teſtament*, were not conceived and uttered by *meer Men*, without the aſſiſtance of ſome *other* Being, of *greater Knowledge* and *Wiſdom*.

And the ſame likewiſe may eaſily be made out of the *Miracles* there Recorded; that they were ſuch Works as *Man alone*, by his *own Power* could not perform.

For ſome of them were ſuch, that the Perſons who did them had never ſeen or heard of before; as *caſting out of Devils*, *ſpeaking unknown Tongues*, &c. How came it then into their Minds to think of them? And when they did think of them, how had they the Confidence to believe they could do them, and venture upon a tryal?

Moſt of thoſe they had heard of before, were by *them themſelves* believed to ſurpaſs *Humane Skill*, and to have been done by a *Higher Power*; and therefore they could have no Inducement, or Incouragement from thence, to try their own Abilities upon them; nay, further, any indeavours of this kind were utterly inconſiſtent with ſuch a Belief as is here ſuppoſed.

The *Skill* or *Art* of doing any of them, in a *natural* way, was never pretended to before, and was never known to *any other* Perſons; Whence therefore had *theſe Men* their great unheard of Skill? *Raiſing the Dead*,

Dead, Curing all manner of Diſeaſes, and ſeveral other things Recorded to have been done by *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*, have always been lookt upon as impoſſible to be effected by any *Humane Art*, or *Application* of the Powers and Vertues of Bodies to one another: And, not to mention thoſe other Miracles of *Chriſt*, and *his Apoſtles*, which ſeem *more* above *Humane* Power, it cannot be ſuppoſed, but among thoſe vaſt promiſcuous Multitudes of *Blind*, *Lame*, *Sick* and *Maimed*, that were cured by them, there muſt have been ſome, ſuch as were then, and always before, and would be now, accounted *Incurable* by the help of any *known* Remedies.

But, allowing that the ſecret force of *Nature* is very great; that the Powers of *Natural Bodies*, and their Operations upon one another, are very ſtrange and wonderful; and that we cannot conclude ſuch or ſuch Effects are *impoſſible*, becauſe we have never ſeen the like before; that there may be Medicines proportioned to every Diſeaſe; and that there may be an Univerſal Remedy for all found out, as ſeveral Learned Men have imagined: Allowing, I ſay, all this; and ſuppoſing fur-

ther, that *Chriſt* and *his Diſciples* were acquainted with all theſe mighty Secrets; yet, if the *Hiſtory of the Goſpel* be true, as we have proved before it is; the wonderful Cures they did, could not be brought about in a *natural way*, ſuch as is here intimated; becauſe 'tis plain, by the account we have of theſe Matters, that they never made uſe of any manner of Applications of other Bodies to the Perſons Cured by them; (excepting one in the caſe of a Blind Man) and, if they had, whatever the Medicines were which they uſed, no body could have been Cured by them, in the manner Perſons are ſaid to be Cured in the *New Teſtament*.

The firſt is plain from all the ſeveral Relations there given of the Cures that were done; it being every where almoſt poſitively affirmed that Perſons were Cured by *Chriſt* and his *Diſciples immediatly*; moſt of them upon their *ſpeaking the Word*, without any kind of operation or proceſs, ſome of them by a *Touch of their Garment*, and ſome by *their Shadow paſſing over them*. And however ignorant we may be in the *Nature of Bodies*, we comprehend the whole Force, and Power, and all the poſſible Vertues of a *Word*, a

Touch

Touch of a Garment, and a *Humane Shadow*.

But, if the moſt powerful Medicines the World affords had been applied, 'tis demonſtrable from the *Nature and Laws of Motion*, and the *conſtant Manner of Operation*, obſerved in all other Natural Works, that the Cures performed by *Chriſt* and *his Diſciples*, could not have been wrought *in an inſtant*, nor in any ſhort time without ſuch *violent Agitations* in the Bodies Cured as would have appeared in *ſtrange External Marks*; which muſt have been taken notice of by all the Beholders, and conſequently ſome of them would have been mentioned in the Accounts that were written of the Facts; whereas we find no ſuch things in all the Hiſtory of the *New Teſtament*; unleſs perhaps one Caſe of a Blind Man be thought an Objection to what is here advanced: But this Inſtance, which is made uſe of by ſome to prove that this, and all other Miracles were brought about the ſame way, by the Application of proper means, is a very good Argument to the contrary; for beſides, that the means here uſed had no particular fitneſs in them for the End deſigned above any other what-

ſoever, this was the ſloweſt Cure we read of, and took up the longeſt time in doing.

And, if theſe Obſervations hold true, as to the *Cures* wrought by *Chriſt* and *his Diſciples*, they are of much greater weight, with reſpect to ſeveral other of the Miracles done by them. If the Sick could not be Cured by a *Word's ſpeaking* without the uſe of Remedies, How could the Dead be Raiſed without any other Application? If no Application could Cure the Sick *in an inſtant*, what Force or Power of *Natural Bodies* could Raiſe the Dead *immediately?* And to what ſecret Workings of Nature can we aſcribe the power of ſpeaking ſeveral Languages, which the Speakers were utterly ignorant of, immediately before they ſpoke them?

Neither is it to any purpoſe to urge, that the Relation of all theſe *Miracles* in the *New Teſtament* is imperfect, and ſeveral Circumſtances omitted; which, if they had been Recorded, would have enabled us to explain how the Facts might have been brought to paſs in a *Natural, ordenary Way:* For, if that Account we have of them, or thoſe Circumſtances

ſtances that are mentioned are true, 'tis impoſſible, by the addition of any other Circumſtances whatſoever, to make the Events appear ſuch as might be compaſſed by *Human Power*.

If ſeveral Perſons, who were unknown to *Chriſt*, and whoſe Conſtitution and Caſe he had no antecedent knowledge of, were Cured by him, *immediately* upon his *firſt view* of them, as ſoon as he had *ſpoke the Word*, as 'tis plain they were from abundance of Inſtances in the Goſpel's; if *Lazarus* came out of the Grave *immediately* upon *Chriſt's calling of him*; if the *Centurion's* Servant was healed the *ſelf ſame hour Chriſt* ſpoke that it ſhould be done, without his going to the Houſe where he lay; and if the *Apoſtles* were enabled to ſpeak ſeveral Languages, which, the Day before they ſpoke them they knew nothing of; which things are all poſitively aſſerted in the *New Teſtament*, let us imagine what *other Circumſtances* we pleaſe, and ſuppoſe *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*, indued with all the Knowledge and Power that any Man ever was, or could be Maſter of, 'tis impoſſible to give ſuch an account of theſe Matters, conſiſtent with that Relation we have of

them in the *New Teſtament*, as can ſatisfie any Man they were Effected by *Humane Skill* and *Power*; as does evidently appear from the Reflections before laid down.

But, if it be further Objected, notwithſtanding the Evidence before given, which plainly proves the contrary, that all theſe things we call *Miracles* would have happen'd according to the Eſtabliſh'd *Courſe of Nature*, at the time, and in the manner they did happen, whether *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles* had uſed ſuch previous Signs as made *them* appear to be the Authors of them or not; and ſo all the Facts are to be aſcribed to *other natural Cauſes*, tho' they could not be Effected by *Man*; if this, I ſay, ſhould be urged, and the ſuppoſition allowed, then muſt all the *Miracles*, with reſpect to the pretended Authors of them, be reſolved into *Prophecies*, and that will amount to the ſame thing: For the *foretelling* all thoſe wonderful Events Recorded in the *New Teſtament*, as done by *Chriſt* and *his Diſciples*, will plainly appear, by what has been already ſaid upon the Subject of *Prophecies*, to be as much above the *Power* and *Skill* of *Man* as the *doing* of them would be.

The

The vaſt number of *Miracles* done, the multitude of Perſons concern'd in them, the publick Manner of doing them, and the Times and Places in which they were done, take off all imaginable ſuſpicion of *Confederacy*, if the Natures of the Facts would have admitted it, as 'tis certain they would not; and therefore I ſhall not ſuppoſe that Objection, and nothing more can poſſibly be urged.

And as the *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, which concern the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, did certainly proceed from ſome *Higher Power* and *Knowledge* than that of *Men*; ſo likewiſe did the *Goſpel* it ſelf; by which I mean that *whole Scheme of Doctrine* delivered by *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*, as we find it contained in the Books of the *New Teſtament*.

'Tis allowed on all Hands, that there never was ſo Juſt and Noble a Draught of *Morality* as the *Chriſtian*; ſo full and conſiſtent a Scheme of *Humane Duty*; laid down in ſo plain and ſimple a Manner, without any Art or Oſtentation; and preſs'd upon Mankind with ſo much Earneſtneſs and Authority; without any viſible Intereſt or Advantage of the Preachers

Preachers and Writers; and without any Worldly Dignity or Title that made them Superiour to the loweſt of thoſe they Preach'd and Writ to.

It muſt be likewiſe confeſſed that the *Grounds* and *Reaſons* upon which the *Practiſe* of this Morality is inforced, by the Preachers of it, are very New and Surprizing; that the things they require Men to *believe*, in order to render their Practice of the Duties injoyned them effectual, are very ſhocking and repugnant to the common Opinions and Prejudices of Mankind, but eſpecially thoſe of that time in which they were firſt Publiſhed; and that the very *Language* and *Forms of Expreſſion*, in which the great *Articles of the Chriſtian Faith* are delivered in the *Scriptures*, are very different from whatever we find uſed upon any other Occaſion.

Now, theſe Things being granted, I cannot poſſibly conceive how any Man ſhould at once *invent* ſuch a Syſtem of *Morality* as the *Chriſtian*, ſo very different from all others known before, and ſo contrary to all the Paſſions and reputed Intereſts of Men; nor how he ſhould take upon him to *injoyn* ſeveral Duties as neceſſary,

ceſſary, which none of the Learned in theſe Matters had judg'd ſo before; as *bearing* and *forgiving Injuries*, *doing Good for Evil*, and the like; ſhould poſſitively *affirm* ſome Things as certain, which were doubted of till then, as the *Reſurrection of the Body*, and a *future ſtate of Happineſs and Miſery*, &c. ſhould *command* every thing he ſaid to be believed, or done, under the ſevereſt Penalties imaginable; and all this barely upon *his own Word and Authority*, without conſulting any other Principles, or Rules of Action, which had before obtained, or giving any Reaſons to prove his own, were better, and therefore ought to be ſubmitted to.

But, if any Man can be ſuppoſed to have invented all the *Chriſtian Morality* himſelf; what force of Imagination, what turn or agitation of Thoughts, could have helpt him to conceive that Set of Notions which make up the whole *Chriſtian Faith*, in the way and manner they are joyned together in the *New Teſtament*? If they had entered into his Mind, what Reaſon or Motives could he have to believe them? And, had he believed them himſelf, how could he expect to make others aſſent to the truth of them? How could

could he imagine that *theſe Opinions* would recommend his *Morality* to the World? Why ſhould he think himſelf obliged to propagate them; to inſiſt upon them as neceſſary; to make the danger of disbelieving them as great, as neglecting the Duties of his Morality; and yet give no other Reaſon to the World for what he ſaid, but his bare Saying it?

Beſides, were all theſe *Chriſtian Doctrines*, relating both to *Faith* and *Practice*, found out by *meer Humane Sagacity*; 'tis extreamly difficult to imagine, that neither the *Contrivers*, nor *Publiſhers* of them, ſhould any where in their Preaching or Writing, arrogate any Thing to themſelves upon this account; but ſhould conſtantly renounce the Honour of the Diſcovery, and never betray any deſign of procuring to themſelves Eſteem, or any other Advantage of Life whatſoever, for obliging Mankind with ſo beneficial a Scheme of Things as the Goſpel propoſes.

And, to carry this Point yet farther; If it be ſo very hard to imagine how *any Perſon whatſoever* ſhould frame ſuch Notions and Opinions to themſelves, and afterwards

terwards act upon ſuch Motives, and obſerve ſuch a Conduct in the Publication of them; 'tis much more inconceivable how *ignorant* and *unlearned Men*, of *very low Education*, and *conſtantly imployed in mean Affairs*, ſhould do all this: And 'tis particularly unaccountable how *Jews* ſhould give ſuch a Character and Repreſentation of their *Meſſiah*, and his Office and Buſineſs in the World, ſo directly contrary to all the Opinions and Expectations of that whole People; and upon that account ſo very unlikely to be entertained or credited.

'Tis moreover impoſſible to conceive how *ſo many* Men, as were concern'd in the Preaching and Propagating *Chriſtianity* in ſeveral parts of the World, at the ſame time, ſhould, before any thing was committed to Writing, all agree upon the *ſame Set of Doctrines*, uſe the *ſame* open, ſincere, unartful *Method of delivering them*, and the *ſame* bold, authoritative *way of inforcing* them; and ſhould all ſhew the *ſame Courage* and Reſolution in *maintaining the Truth* of what they Preach'd, and in bearing all manner of Loſſes and Afflictions for the *ſake* of that Teſtimony: This, I ſay, is not to be conceived or accounted

accounted for, if they were not *aſſiſted* by continual *Revelations*, and conſtant ſupplies of *Spiritual Strength* and *Force*, which proceeded from ſome *more powerful and knowing Being* than *Man*.

That they were all *firmly perſuaded* they were thus aſſiſted, is the leaſt that can poſſibly be ſuppoſed; and how the *invention of the whole Chriſtian Scheme*, and the *conduct of thoſe* that *Publiſh'd* and *Preach'd* it to the World, and *Suffered* for it, can be aſcribed to *Reſvery* and *Enthuſiaſm* (which muſt be the Caſe, if that Perſuaſion was ill grounded) is much more unintelligible; ſince, as has been proved before, theſe Effects are ſuch as exceed the moſt improved *Force*, and moſt accompliſh'd *Wiſdom* of *Man*.

'Tis certain then, from all that has been ſaid, that the *Miracles*, *Prophecies* and *Doctrines*, contained in the *New Teſtament* could not be the Work and Contrivance of *meer Man*.

In the next place therefore, I am to prove that God was the Author of them all.

That *God might*, if he pleaſed, *Reveal* ſuch Things to *Men*, by *ſecret Impreſſion* upon

upon their Minds, as they did not know before, and could not have found out of themſelves, has been proved already; and therefore all the *Prophecies* mentioned in the *New Teſtament*; all *the Doctrines* which *peculiarly* concern *Chriſtianity*; the *conſciouſneſs* that *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* had, that *they could do ſuch Miracles* as are Recorded of them; or a *firm Perſuaſion* that they *would be done*, upon their uſe of ſuch external Signs; and *ſeveral of the Miracles themſelves*, ſuch as telling the private Thoughts and Actions of Men, ſpeaking ſtrange Languages, and the like, may all be accounted for this way.

And whoever believes a *God*, muſt likewiſe grant, that 'twas *poſſible* for him to *effect all the other Miracles*, either by an *original Deſignation* of ſuch a chain and connexion of Events, or by an *immediate interpoſition* of his Power.

That it was not only *poſſible*, but very *likely* and *probable*, that *God ſhould reveal* himſelf to Mankind in this manner, appears from the *common Opinion* of Men in all Ages, that he had revealed ſomething to the World, and their *common Expectation* that he *would* manifeſt his Will to them in *further* Diſcoveries.

In

In all the Accounts of paſt Things we have left us, we find that every where what was Great or Good, was always aſcribed to ſome *Divine Power*. Not to mention the *Jews*, whoſe Opinions in this reſpect, are ſufficiently known and allowed; if any thing uſeful or beneficial to Mankind, was invented among the *Heathens*, the *Gods* had the Praiſe and Honour of the Diſcovery; if by Dreams or waking Suggeſtions, Men were put in mind of procuring themſelves ſome Advantage, or avoiding ſome Evil, the *Gods* were thank'd for it; many alſo were the abſurd and the ſuperſtitious Opinions of the People, concerning the way and manner of the *Gods* diſcovering Things to them, by the means of external Signs; but this they were all moſt conſtantly and unanimouſly ſatisfied of, That their *Religion* came immediately from *Heaven*; and what we call *Prophecies* and *Miracles* were always eſteemed proper Marks and Characters of *Divine Power*; eſpecially if they any ways contributed to the happineſs and welfare of Mankind.

This has been the conſtant *Faith* of the World at all Times; and ſo far as it concerns

cerns *Divine Revelation in general*, and the ways of conveying and confirming it by *inward impreſſions* upon the Mind, and by *Prophecies* and *Miracles*, I think, is very well grounded. For, firſt, That there *has been* ſuch a Thing as *Revelation* in the World; and that there have been *true Prophecies* uttered, and *true Miracles* wrought to confirm it, ſeems to me very plain. For, not to inſiſt upon that common, but very true Obſervation, that all *Pretences* of this nature muſt be founded upon *Realities*, and that therefore it cannot be conceived how *Revelations*, *Prophecies* or *Miracles* ſhould ever have been *pretended to* or *believed*, if there never had been any *true* ones of each kind; omitting, I ſay, this Reflection, it appears very unaccountable to me, upon a ſuppoſition that there never was any *Revelation*, how there could be any ſuch Thing as *Religion*, *Civil Government*, or *Learning* in the World.

Learning certainly depends upon *Government*: When Men are not united together in Society, and live ſecurely under good Laws and Defences, no Improvements of Knowledge are to be expected; and I do not ſee how ſuch a Union

ſhould be made without a good ſhare of *Religious Notions*; nor how a looſe divided Herd of Men, ſuch as we muſt now ſuppoſe, living in a State of Want and Ignorance, who are wholly imployed in providing themſelves Neceſſaries, and ſecuring what they have from others, and conſequently who have but few Ideas, and no leiſure or curioſity to get more; how, I ſay, *ſuch Men as theſe* ſhould be furniſhed with any Notions of *Religion*, or how they ſhould be able to form a *Regular Government* and *Conſtitution* without, I cannot poſſibly imagine.

The preſent State of the *Americans* is an inſtance which confirms me in the Opinion I have laid down; for, I cannot help believing, that if this People ſhould always continue divided from the reſt of the World, and have no Commerce with other Men, nor any *Revelation* from *God*, they would conſtantly, as long as the World ſhould indure, remain in the ſame ſtupid ignorant Condition we now find them in; or, if poſſible, worſe, without any further improvement in *Religion*, *Policy* or *Learning*.

This ſeems to me much more probable than that any Polite, Learned, and well-govern'd

govern'd Nation, which once lived under the Advantages of Wiſe Laws and a Rational Religion, ſhould in ſome few Ages become as Rude, Barbarous, and Ignorant as the preſent *Americans*; and yet this has been almoſt the Fate of many a Countrey, and would have been quite, if they had been deprived of the Aſſiſtance of better, and more inlightened Neighbours, as the poor *Americans* were.

And in general, from many Obſervations 'tis evident, That Men are naturally ſo apt to *degenerate*, and fall into a State of Ignorance, Confuſion, and Wildneſs, even till they become *like the Beaſts that periſh*, that all remains of *natural Religion*, ſeem purely owing to *Tradition*, and not to Study and Search; and if ſo, that Tradition muſt have had its Original from *Revelation*, the former ſet of Men being as unlikely to find out and cultivate Religion of themſelves, as the preſent.

So much is viſibly owing to *Revelation*, That, had it not been for the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian Pretences*, there had hardly been now any ſuch Thing as *Religion* in the World, if we may judge what would have been in other Places, by what we

find actually is in those Countries where the *Jewish* and *Christian Revelation* were ever heard of, or are now forgot. Nay, those obscure Notices of Religion we find among the Ancient and Modern *Pagans*, are, most of them, plainly derived from something contained in the Scriptures of the *Old* and *New Testament*.

And, as from these Observations concerning the general Opinion of Mankind about *Revelation*, and the different State and Condition of Humane Affairs where *Revelation* is supposed, and where none is pretended to, it appears very probable, that there *has been* such a thing in the World; so likewise does it seem very agreeable to the best and purest Notions our most improved Reason is now able to form concerning *God*, and our selves, and the Obligations we owe to him that *God should reveal* himself to us.

We cannot but think, however we came first by these Opinions, that 'tis highly suitable to the *Nature of God*, to give Men true Notions concerning himself; to acquaint them how and in what manner they ought to Obey and Worship him; and to direct them in the Knowledge, and assist them in the Attainment of their Happiness. We

We are very ſenſible of our own Ignorance, Miſery, and Impotence: We cannot by any Arguments of Reaſon find out how, or when we were made; what ſhould be the occaſion of that contrariety of Principles and Inclinations we experience within us; why we ſhould act contrary to what we our ſelves think our ſelves obliged to act, and be more diſpoſed ſo to act, than otherwiſe; why we ſhould be determined to purſue Happineſs, and yet be Miſerable; why the injoyment of ſeveral Pleaſures we are inclined to, ſhould be often attended with greater degrees of Pain; and acting as our Reaſon approves and preſcribes, ſhould be oftentimes as prejudicial to our preſent Happineſs; why we ſhould look upon it as our Duty to ſerve *God*, and yet in ſeveral Inſtances, indure more Trouble and Miſery upon that account, than thoſe who live in defiance of Religion; theſe are Things our Reaſon is puzled to explain to us: And, if there ſhould be a future State after this Life, as we have very good grounds to believe there is, how can we be ſure our Religion or Piety was acceptable to God? And, ſuppoſing our ſervice was proper ſo far as it

went, what assurance can we have, that the many constant violations of our Duty which our own Consciences accuse us of, may not render our small Service ineffectual? Besides, the Bounds and Limits of our Conduct and Behaviour, with regard to our selves, and one another, must be very uncertain and precarious, when we have no other Guide but our unassisted Reason; and no Man is obliged to submit to any other Judgment but his own; for in this Case, every Man, according to the difference of his Passions, Prejudices and Interests, must have a different Standard to regulate his Actions by.

These are Things we are all sensible of now, and which, without allowing *Revelation*, we are not able to account for, or satisfie our selves about, notwithstanding all the improvements of Rational Knowledge we at present enjoy: And the expediency of being rightly inform'd in all these Matters, is esteemed so great, that 'tis urg'd by some, as an Argument against the Truth of the *Jewish* and *Christian Revelation*, that they have not been Universal enough; it being look'd upon by the Objectors, as a Thing incon-

inconſiſtent with the Goodneſs of God, to ſuffer ſo great a part of the World, in all Ages, to live in a State of groſs Ignorance, Barbarity and Diſorder, as Ancient Hiſtory and Modern Experience inform us of.

Since therefore we cannot but be ſatisfied from Reflections upon our own Nature improved, and from Obſervations upon the wretched State of a large part of Mankind who live in Ignorance, that the Difficulties which concern the Knowledge of Religion, are very great, that the Effects and Conſequences of the want of Religion, are very Diſmal and Calamitous; and that Men in ſuch a State of Ignorance, as we find ſome whole Countries are, would very probably, never, by any force of their own Faculties, without foreign Helps and Aſſiſtances, reach to that Knowledge of *Natural Religion*, that ſome Nations of the preſent Age are arrived to, which is manifeſtly owing to thoſe Books they have among them, and which they look upon as communicated to them from *God*: Since we are further convinced, that Perſons in ſuch a State of Ignorance, as we now ſuppoſe, if they ſhould be allowed to make ſome

advances in the Knowledge of Natural Religion, could not, by *meer Reaſon*, without *Revelation*, proceed ſo far, as upon good grounds, to be fully aſſured of the Truth and Obligation of what they knew, and the Advantages or Dangers that attended their Performance, or Tranſgreſſion of the Rules they laid down; that they would never be able to explain any of the Difficulties before mentioned; and that, in a ſhort Time, by the over-ruling prevalence of preſent Pleaſures and Paſſions, working differently in different Men, they would relapſe into their former State again: Upon all theſe Accounts, it ſeems very expedient, that *God* ſhould give *Men* a *true and perfect Scheme of Religion*, agreeable to the *Reaſon*, and fitted to all the *Wants* and *Exigencies* of *Mankind*.

However, I dare not venture to argue that, becauſe it appears ſo very *expedient* for *us*, and ſo *ſuitable* to the *Nature of God*, that there ſhould be ſome *Revelation* made to the World; therefore *God has actually* done it, becauſe I cannot comprehend all the particular Reaſons and Ends of *God*'s acting with regard to *Men here*; nor what allowance

he

he will be pleaſed to make in his Future Judgment upon them, in order to *another State:* But, if there be a *Revelation* pretended to, and I find, upon a ſtrict Examination of it, that it has all the Marks and Characters of ſuch a Revelation, as our Reaſon tells us *Men wanted*, and was very *proper* and *becoming God to give*, and ſuch a one, as has been proved before, *Man himſelf could not be the Author of*, I muſt be convinced from hence that it *came from God.* And ſuch a *Revelation* as this is the *Chriſtian.*

There we find a very juſt and rational Account of the Nature and Attributes of God, of the Original Formation of the World, and particularly the Creation of Man, the change and alteration of his firſt Condition, and the unhappy Conſequences of it; *from thence* we are enabled to explain theſe contrary Tendencies and Principles of Action we experience in our ſelves, that unequal Compoſition of Perfections and Weakneſſes, Capacities and Wants we are ſenſible of, the Ignorance of which makes Man the moſt unaccountable part of the whole Univerſe; *There* we are acquainted with the moſt proper ſuitable way of Worſhipping

ping and Serving God; *There* we have the trueſt draught of Morality, the beſt and moſt exalted Scheme of all the Duties which concern the Government of our ſelves, and our Behaviour to one another; *By this Revelation* we are aſſured, that the obſervance of Religious Duties in ſuch a manner will be acceptable to God; all our Doubts about the Imperfections of our Obedience are removed, and our Conſciences intirely ſatisfied, a way being *there* ſhewed us how our Piety and Vertue may be rendred well pleaſing to God, notwithſtanding the many failings they are accompanied with, the Wiſdom and Kindneſs of which Expedient we cannot but acknowledge and admire; *The ſame Revelation* does likewiſe fix and aſcertain our Belief of a Future State, and propoſes ſuch Rewards and Puniſhments in another World as are proper and ſufficient Motives to determine us to the Practice of Religion in this, and gives us a ſatisfactory Explication of all the preſent Inequalities of Providence in the conduct of Humane Affairs.

This is certainly a very rational Scheme of things, and very agreeable to all the Notions

Notions our Souls are able to frame of God; and therefore ſince it could not proceed from *Man*, as has already been ſhewn, we muſt aſcribe it to *God*.

But moreover, beſides the *nature of the Things* revealed, the *Ways* and *Methods* made uſe of to *Communicate* them to the World, and to *Eſtabliſh* and *Propagate* the Belief of them among Men, are Infallible Marks that the *Revelation came from God*. His Power and Wiſdom are as Legible in this whole Diſpenſation, as in the Frame and Structure of the Univerſe, as will eaſily appear from a ſhort view of the Progreſs and Conduct of this great Work of the *Salvation of Man*.

For, except the *Hand of the Lord* was in it, how came the *Jews* to have better and juſter Notions of God, the Original of the World, and the Nature of Man than any other Nation under Heaven, when they had no manner of Learning among them, no gradual Improvements in Knowledge as we find other Countries had? How came the whole People to have theſe Notions as well as the chief and moſt knowing among them? In all the Periods of

Learning

Learning among the *Egyptians*, *Chaldeans*, *Greeks* and *Romans*, the *People* were generally Idolaters, and the *Priests* and *Philosophers* durſt not propagate better Notions of God when they had found them out, tho' even their beſt had a ridiculous mixture of *Fable* and Superſtition in them, How then came the People of the *Jews* to remain intirely free from Idolatry for ſo many Years, ever ſince they became a Nation? Or, if we believe their own Story, and they were as inclinable to Worſhip Idols, and imbrace abſurd Opinions of God and Religion as any other Nation, How came they to recover themſelves again, and preſerve the true Worſhip of God among them? And how at laſt, when they were ſo wedded to the external form and manner of Worſhipping the true God as to place all their Religion in it, to the neglect of Moral Duties, at a time when there was no other ſort of Learning among them, how I ſay, came a perfecter Scheme of *Morality* and *Religion* to proceed from thence than from any other Quarter of the World; and ſuch a Scheme as no body that profeſſed it durſt think of altering, adding to, or diminiſhing, when no ſuch reſpect was paid

to

to any Philoſophers Scheme by his own Sect or Party? To whom can we aſcribe ſuch a wonderful Preſervation of *true Religion* but to *God*, who was able to bring *Strength out of Weakneſs*, and even of *Stones to raiſe up Children unto Abraham.*

If afterwards we conſider *by what particular Hands* this perfecter Scheme of Religion was delivered to Mankind, and *in what manner* it was firſt Publiſhed and Preached to the World, here the *Finger of God* will plainly appear alſo. For all the Inſtruments and Miniſters of this great Work were Perſons of a low Rank and mean Occupations, Ignorant and Unlearned, and *of no Reputation in the World*, and their Preaching was plain and ſimple, *without the enticing Words of Man's Eloquence*; and yet, where-ever they came the Goſpel prevailed, *many were daily added to the Church*, and, in a little time, *they drew the whole World after them*; this they did notwithſtanding all the Oppoſition that was made to them, by the Reaſonings and Diſputings of the Learned, and by the Force and Authority of Magiſtrates and Men in Power; notwithſtanding the *Doctrine* they Preached *was*

every

everywhere ſpoken againſt, and the Preachers and Believers of it were everywhere Perſecuted and Afflicted with all the variety of Sufferings their Enemies could invent: And when we perceive it ſo ordered that *the Fooliſh things of the World* ſhould *Confound the Wiſe*, that *the Weak and Baſe things of the World, and things which are deſpiſed*, ſhould *Confound the things which are Mighty* and in great Eſteem, we cannot but acknowledge that *God hath choſen them*, and what is thus *wonderful in our Eyes is the Lord's doing*. Thus it became *God* Almighty to humble *Men*, and ſhew his Power in a way directly contrary to all the meaſures they would have imagined proper.

Was it not likewiſe every way worthy of God, and agreeable both to the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of his Deſigns in giving Mankind a more perfect Model of Religion than they were hitherto acquainted with, that he ſhould convince them of the Beauty and Reaſonableneſs, and incourage them to the Practice of it, by exemplifying the whole Scheme in the Lives of the firſt Publiſhers and Preachers of this Religion? And where were ſuch perfect Characters of Men ever heard of before,

as

as thoſe of *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*, and moſt of the *firſt Chriſtian Believers?* What could more demonſtrate the Force and Influence of the *Chriſtian Religion*, and recommend it more Effectually to the World than this? As therefore the *Knowledge* of a *true* and *reaſonable Service of God* muſt be referred to him, ſo muſt likewiſe the *power to will and to do*, according to all thoſe Rules and Meaſures he has been pleaſed to preſcribe us.

But further, when *ſuch Doctrines* as thoſe o f the *Goſpel* which were *Preached*, *Believed*, and *Propagated* in *ſuch a manner*, and recommended by *Perſons of ſuch Characters*, as is before ſpecified, are confirm'd by ſo many *Prophecies* and *Miracles*, and thoſe *of ſuch kinds* as we find mentioned in the *New Teſtament*; it muſt be likewiſe allowed that *God* was the *Author* of all theſe *Signs* and *Wonders*. For, if it be *poſſible*, and ſometimes *expedient*, for God to reveal ſomething to Mankind, as has been already ſhewn, more infallible Tokens and Indications of himſelf he cannot give us, than *ſuch Prophecies*, and *ſuch Miracles* as thoſe Recorded in the *New Teſtament*; no greater Inſtances of *Knowledge*

ledge and *Power*, beſides what appear in the Making and Governing the World, are conceivable by us; and what better deſerved ſuch an *extraordinary* and *immediate* Manifeſtation of theſe Attributes of God then the *Goſpel?* To what nobler Ends could God imploy his Power than for the confirming and promoting the belief of ſuch a juſt, reaſonable, and beneficial Scheme of things as the *Chriſtian Religion?*

But beſides, *theſe Prophecies* and *Miracles* were not only certain *Indications* of *Divine Revelation* and *Aſſiſtance* in themſelves, and more undoubtedly ſo to us, for being made uſe of to confirm a Doctrine which deſerved ſuch Atteſtation; but they were alſo the propereſt and moſt ſuitable *means* that could be choſen for Eſtabliſhing the belief of the Goſpel, to which they were deſigned, and conſequently muſt be imployed by God to that End: For, what was more becoming the Divine Wiſdom, and what could be more effectual to convince Men of the truth of ſuch *future* things as are Promiſed and Threatened in the Chriſtian Religion, than by the Completion of *Prophecies*, ſpoken of at ſeveral diſtant Periods of time

time before the Events happen'd, to give them a ſenſible proof, that *all things were manifeſt and open to the Eyes of God*, and that *a Thouſand Years was to him but as One Day?* And that the *ſtrangeneſs* of the Chriſtian Events relating to a *Future State*, upon the proſpect of which the whole Religion is founded, might not ſhock the Faith of Mankind, what wiſer and more convincing Method could be taken, than by various Inſtances of things actually done in their Preſence, of as ſtrange and ſurprizing a Nature as thoſe foretold, and ſome of them of the very ſame kind, as *the Reſurrection of the Dead, Aſcenſion into Heaven, &c.* How, I ſay, could Men be better ſatisfied, than by ſuch *preſent Experience* of the *Divine Power* that *nothing was impoſſible to God*; and that there might be ſuch things in a Future State, which *Eye had not yet ſeen, nor Ear heard, nor had entered into the Heart of Man to conceive?*

Thus have I proved in ſhort, that the *Prophecies, Miracles* and *Doctrines* contained in the *New Teſtament*, and conſequently the *whole Chriſtian Religion*, which were before ſhewn to exceed all *Humane* Reach

and Capacity, did certainly proceed from *God.*

After which proof the third thing propoſed will be very eaſily made out, *viz.* that 'tis very improper and abſurd to aſcribe theſe things to *Evil Spirits.*

All that we know of *Good* or *Evil Spirits, without Revelation,* is that there have been ſome Men unaccountably aſſiſted by ſome inviſible Power, to ſay and do certain things which they knew they could not have ſaid or done without ſuch Aſſiſtance; that, if what was ſaid or done this way was ſerious and concerning, and ſeem'd to contribute any thing to the Good of Men, it was reckoned to proceed from a *Good Spirit* appointed by the *Supreme God* for that End; if the things ſaid or done were Trifling or Hurtful they were thought to come from *Evil Spirits* permitted by the Supreme God to Amuſe or Puniſh Men; and that Sacrifices and other Religious Rites were performed by the Perſons particularly concern'd to expreſs their Thanks to the One, or to appeaſe the Other, theſe *Good* and *Evil Spirits* being eſteemed as *Gods* of a *Lower Order,* who had different Offices aſſign'd them by the *Supreme.*

In

In the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, we have a more particular account of *Good* and *Evil Spirits*, the first occasion of their Distinction, and their different Offices and Imployments as such; and *there* we find that what was said or done by *Angels*, or *Good Spirits*, was by the expres's Order and Command of *God*, and is Attributed to him in the same manner, as if it had proceeded immediately from himself; and what was said or done by *Devils* or *Evil Spirits*, was by the Permission of *God* for the Trial or Punishment of Men.

The Power God suffered *Evil Spirits* to Exercise, and the Signs and Wonders he permitted them to do, in order to tempt Men from the Belief or Practice of those things he had injoined and commanded them, were so easily distinguishable from the *positive expres's Manifestations of Divine Power*, that any Man was justly to be Condemn'd for being deceived by them: For besides that *Miracles* done by the help of *Evil Spirits*, were, as a Judicious Author well observes, always *foretold*, or *outdone*, or both, and consequently could never be of force enough to invalidate a *Divine Revelation*: Pascal.

Beſides this, I ſay, the *Works of the Devil*, and the *Doctrines of Devils*, are ſo contrary to the Reaſon and trueſt Intereſts of Mankind, and ſo eaſily known to be ſo, eſpecially when compared with the *Doctrine of God* and the *Fruits* of it, that no *Miracles* or *Signs* whatſoever can be ſufficient to eſtabliſh their Credit.

And therefore 'tis very abſurd, and contrary to all that the *Scriptures* inform us of concerning *Devils* or *Evil Spirits*, to ſuppoſe that they ſhould imploy all their Power and Cunning to promote a pure and holy Service of One God, and to deſtroy all the Pretences of Superſtition and Idolatry: 'Tis contrary to all the Policy of the *Kingdom of Darkneſs*, as our Saviour argues, that it ſhould be *divided againſt it ſelf*, and that ſome Evil Spirits ſhould diſturb and oppoſe the reſt, when they are all carrying on the ſame Work.

But neither *Jews*, *Chriſtians*, or *Heathens*, ever entertained any ſuch Notions of *Devils* or *Evil Spirits*, as to make them the Authors of any thing that recommended and eſtabliſh'd what they call'd *Vertue* in the World, or contributed to the Peace, Welfare, or *Happineſs of Mankind*.

'Tis

'Tis manifeſt then that ſuch a Scheme, as we have ſeen the *Chriſtian Religion* is, could not be Contrived, and Propagated through the World in ſuch a manner by *Evil Spirits*; neither was it poſſible that the firſt *Preachers* and *Profeſſors* of this Religion ſhould derive their extraordinary Characters from the Poſſeſſion and Influence of *Devils*. Theſe are ſuch Notorious Truths, that there is no need of further Inlargments upon this Head.

Thus have I finiſhed what I undertook under my Second General, and by a *full* and *direct Proof* made it very Evident that *all the principal Matters of Fact related in the New Teſtament are true.*

III. I ſhall ſtrengthen and confirm the ſame Truth by ſhewing the *improbability* and *abſurdity* of a *contrary Suppoſition*, and the *weakneſs* of all the *Difficulties* and *Objections* rais'd againſt the *Scriptures*, and the Matters contained in them; which is the third thing I propoſed to make good, in order to my main Deſign, which is to eſtabliſh a firm Belief of the *Chriſtian*

Religion, and all the Obligations of it.

It has been ſufficiently proved already, that if all the *common Matters of Fact* related in the *New Teſtament*, or only the principal of them, ſuch as have been before mentioned are true, in the Manner and Circumſtances there ſet down, it neceſſarily follows from hence that the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* there Recorded muſt be true alſo; and if the Miracles and Prophecies are true, they muſt certainly be the Effects of *Divine Aſſiſtance* and *Revelation*; and conſequently, the *Doctrines* delivered by Perſons ſo aſſiſted muſt come from *God*: This, I ſay, has been fully made out beyond all poſſibility of a a reaſonable Contradiction, and every thing that could be *ſuppoſed*, all the *different Accounts* that could be given of theſe Matters, in order to invalidate the ſtrength of the Inferences drawn from them, have been ſhewn to be falſe and groundleſs.

The next Pretence which the Enemies of *Revealed Religion* make uſe of in the behalf of *Infidelity*, is that the whole Body of the *Scriptures of the New Teſtament* are *Forged* and *Suppoſititious*, that all the principal Matters of Fact there Recorded, with

with all the Strange and New Doctrines built upon them, were purely the *Inventions of Men*; and that the Books were given out by the Contrivers of them, as containing the *Revelations of God*, in order to Establish their Credit and Authority in the World. This is the worst that the utmost Malice of Scoffers and Unbelievers can suggest, but the Folly and unprecidented Absurdity of this Plea will easily appear upon a slight Examination of it.

For first, 'Tis very manifest from what has been said already, that it has been a *constant* and *universal Tradition*, in this part of the World, that *most* of the Books of the *New Testament* were written by *those very Persons*, whom we that are now called *Christians* pretend they were Written by, and that *all* of them were writ about the *same time* we now believe and affirm they were, and therefore there is the *same reason* to believe these Books to be *true* and *genuine* as any other of the same Standing and Antiquity, and, if we consider the importance of the Books, much greater.

In the next place 'tis certain, that in all the Accounts we have left us of the *Hiſtory of Chriſtianity*, it no where appears that any of the Ancient Adverſaries of this Religion, either *Jews* or *Heathens*, *Prophane* or *Revolting Chriſtians*, ever Objected to the true Chriſtian Believers, that the Books in which they pretended their Religion was contained were *Forg'd* and *Suppoſititious*, and conſequently that their Faith was Vain and Ill-grounded: And if thoſe who lived at and near the firſt riſe of Chriſtianity never made uſe of this Objection againſt it then, what ſtrength can it have now, when urged by thoſe who cannot well be more induſtrious Enemies of the *Chriſtian Religion*, than their Unbelieving Predeceſſors were, and cannot poſſibly at this diſtance make out ſuch a diſcovery as they pretend to, could we ſuppoſe the thing true and never detected before, by ſuch as ſought all occaſions to leſſen the Credit, and ſtop the growth of *Chriſtianity* in every Age; which to me ſeems utterly inconceivable.

I am likewiſe perſwaded that *no meer Man*, by the ſtrength of *his own unaſſiſted Capacities*,

pacities, could have framed and contrived ſuch a Book as the *New Teſtament* is. I cannot poſſibly prevail upon my ſelf to believe that ſuch *Facts* as are there Recorded, ſuch a *Contexture of Hiſtory*, ſuch a *Scheme of Doctrines*, ſuch *Characters of Men*, and ſuch a *manner of Writing* as we find throughout that Book, could be altogether the Iſſue and Reſult of *Humane Sagacity alone*.

But ſuppoſing it to be poſſible, that all theſe things might have enter'd into a Man's Mind; ſuppoſing likewiſe that notwithſtanding the preſent appearance of *Univerſal uncontradicted Tradition* to the contrary, a Book now believed to be true, might ſome time or other have been invented without any ground for ſuch a Work in the *reality of things*; allowing, I ſay, the poſſibility of theſe things, 'tis ſtill upon many other Accounts manifeſtly abſurd to imagine that the *Writings of the New Teſtament*, were the Work and Contrivance of Men, without a ſufficient Foundation of *true real Facts* to ſupport them.

This

This will more paticularly appear from theſe two Conſiderations.

1. That there is no *End* or *Deſign* imaginable ſufficient to have determined the ſuppoſed Author of the *New Teſtament* to undertake ſuch a Work.

2. That if the *Principal Matters of Fact* contained in the *New Teſtament*, both *Common* and *Extraordinary*, had not been true, 'twould have been utterly *impoſſible* that the *Chriſtian Religion* ſhould *ever* have been *believed* and *propagated* in the World, in the manner we find it is at preſent.

Firſt then I am to prove that there is no *End* or *Deſign* imaginable ſufficient to have determined the ſuppoſed Author of the *New Teſtament* to undertake ſuch a Work.

All the Ends we can imagine the Author of this Extraordinary Performance acted upon, muſt be either the *Good of Mankind*, his *own particular Intereſt*, or *Reputation in the World*, or purely the *pleaſure of deceiving*, but none of theſe could have Influence enough to produce ſuch a Work, and therefore we muſt account for its Original ſome other way.

For

For firſt, it cannot be ſuppoſed that ſome *Vertuous Good Man*, who endeavoured, as far as he was able, to live up to thoſe Rules we find delivered in the *New Teſtament*, ſhould, out of pure Zeal for the *Welfare* and *Intereſt of Mankind*, Publiſh ſuch a Scheme of Living, as is there laid down, under the groſſeſt form of *Impoſture* imaginable; it could never enter into the thoughts of ſuch a Man as this, to recommend *Simplicity*, *Truth* and *Integrity* by the moſt ſolemn variety of *Lyes* and *Falſhoods* that ever were invented: He that was concern'd to eſtabliſh a *Form of ſound Words*, who repreſents all manner of *Lying*, *Deceit* and *Diſſimulation* as utterly inconſiſtent with that *Model of Religion* he was ſetting up, and who ſtrictly forbids all Men *to do Evil that Good might come of it*; a Perſon, I ſay, of this Character, who was in earneſt, and throughly perſwaded of the truth of the Principles he recommended, cannot be imagined to have *acted* directly contrary to them *himſelf*, in order to have them *Believed* and *Obſerved* by *others*.

'Tis true indeed *Fables* and *Parables* have been often made uſe of as very proper

proper and eaſie means of conveying good Inſtructions to Mankind; but the *Hiſtory of the New Teſtament* is too Particular and Circumſtantial to be reckoned an *Allegory*, and therefore there is no occaſion to prove it none; ſo that if the Principal Matters of Fact Recorded in the *New Teſtament* are not *true*, according to the firſt obvious *literal* meaning of them, the whole Relation muſt be a downright *Forgery*, and conſequently could not be the Work of an *Honeſt Man* invented by him merely *for the good of Mankind.*

The poſſibility of which Suppoſition can no ways be accounted for by the many *Forged* and *Suppoſititious* Writings, Publiſhed by ſome of the *firſt Chriſtians*, in favour of that Religion; for, conſidering only thoſe which made for the *Chriſtian Religion in General*, and may ſeem to have been contrived purely for the Propagation of it among ſuch whoſe Condition was lookt upon as very Miſerable, by reaſon of their Ignorance or Disbelief of *Chriſtianity*; whatever of this Nature was Forged by any *Chriſtians* was not really done upon any *good Motive*, but proceeded from too paſſionate a Concern for the Party they were of, and the Opinions they

they had undertook to defend: When the Enemies of their Religion ſtood out againſt all the *true rational* Proofs urged for it, an eager deſire of convincing thoſe they Diſputed with, and doing Honour to their own Cauſe and Management of it, put them upon *inventing* ſuch things as by the Temper or Conceſſions of their Adverſaries were likelier to prevail with them. This I take to be the true Spring and Cauſe of moſt of thoſe *Falſe* and *Spurious* Writings which were deſigned for the advantage of the *Chriſtian Cauſe in General*, the *Forgeries* that were contrived for the defence of ſome *Particular Doctrine* proceeding moſt commonly from a worſe Original. But 'tis very evident, that the firſt *Invention* and *Publication* of the *whole Chriſtian Scheme* could not be owing to the Influence of any ſuch Principle or Motive as is before mentioned; and if it had, the *Inventer* and *Publiſher* could not have been a *Good Man*, that was ſo Influenced, nor ſuch a good Man as we ſuppoſe acted upon a pure diſintereſted Principle of *Love to Mankind*.

And if it ſhould be further Objected, that 'tis very probable ſome *honeſt well-meaning Chriſtians* were guilty of the like indirect

Practices

Practices, as well as others, and that *purely out of Love and Compaſſion to Mankind*, for *no other End* and *Deſign*, but to bring over as many as they could to the belief of that Religion which they were perſwaded would make them happy; the Anſwer to this is very ready and obvious, *viz.* That theſe were very *plain ſimple* Men, as manifeſtly appears by thoſe Circumſtances whereby their *Forgeries* were diſcovered; their great Zeal for the Salvation of their Brethren was *without Knowledge*, and they were ignorant of the *Nature* and *Power* of that Religion they ſought to Propagate, as imagining ſuch *well-intended Frauds* allowable. But the Author of the *New Teſtament*, if the Work was wholly *Humane*, was certainly a *wiſe knowing* Man, his *Forgery*; if it was one, was ſo well laid and contrived, that no body has been yet able to find it out; and he cannot be thought to have been ſo ignorant of the Religion he made himſelf, as to believe that to be lawful which he had expreſsly forbid; and therefore we may certainly conclude, that if the *Scriptures of the New Teſtament* were *Forged*, the *Author* of them was an *Ill Man* who acted upon ſome *Private Motive*,

tive, and not out of a true generous Concern for the *good of Mankind.*

But what *Principle* or *Motive* can we imagine ſtrong enough to have diſpoſed an *ill Man* to frame ſuch a Work? Not any *Profit*, *Intereſt* or *Advantage* that could accrue to him from it. He could not but foreſee, that to impoſe a New Religion upon the World, to change the Ancient Laws and Cuſtoms of Nations, to Condemn and Expoſe to Contempt, what the Wiſeſt and moſt Powerful part of Mankind had in Veneration, to diſturb Men in the Poſſeſſion of Advantageous Errors and Prejudices, and to put a Reſtraint upon their moſt agreeable Paſſions and Inclinations: This, I ſay, he muſt needs foreſee, would be an attempt too difficult to be manag'd without the moſt violent Oppoſition imaginable, and too great to be effected in his Days. 'Twas hardly poſſible, I think, for a Man of Common Senſe, to perſwade himſelf ſuch a deſign as this ſhould ſucceed at all; but much more inconceivable, that he ſhould imagine Things ſhould be carried on ſo ſmoothly and eaſily, that he ſhould live to enjoy the

the Fruits of his Labour; and a *future Reward in another Life*, could have no antecedent Influence upon him, who is ſuppoſed to Invent the Notion, or at leaſt, to inforce it upon others, without having any good Reaſon to believe it himſelf.

And as it muſt be acknowledged, 'twas very eaſie to foreſee the many Troubles and Difficulties that would attend the Eſtabliſhment of *Chriſtianity*; ſo 'tis plain, that the *Author of the New Teſtament*, whoever he was, underſtood very well, what the Natural Conſequences of ſuch an Attempt were, as appears by the large Repreſentation he makes of the manifold Sufferings and Afflictions which befel all the firſt *Publiſhers* and *Preachers* of the *Chriſtian Religion*, and thoſe who embrac'd the Doctrines they taught.

It muſt be likewiſe confeſſed, That if any of thoſe mentioned in the *New Teſtament*, as concern'd in *Publiſhing* or *Preaching* what is there call'd *the Goſpel*, did really *Suffer ſuch things* as are there Written of them, for endeavouring to perſuade people to believe ſuch *Wonderful Facts* and *Doctrines* as we now find Recorded in that Book, which ſome of them had before invented, and afterwards

cauſed

cauſed to be written, together with the Account of their own Sufferings: If this, I ſay, be ſuppoſed, then it muſt be granted, That the Event was every way anſwerable to the *Proſpect* which we have ſeen the *Author of the Chriſtian Scheme* muſt have had before him when he was upon that Deſign; and which ſoever of theſe Perſons we aſcribe the Work to, we muſt be convinced, that he did, by no means, conſult his own Intereſt in it.

But if ſome *unknown Perſon* was the *Author* of the *New Teſtament*, and the *whole Hiſtory* of it is *pure Fiction*, as muſt be allowed in the Suppoſition we are at preſent concerned to diſprove, then is it utterly impoſſible to find out what Advantage he could propoſe to himſelf by a Performance of this Nature. I cannot conceive, for the Reaſons before given, that he ſhould deſign any Intereſt of his own at all in it; and his being unknown, is no ſmall Argument that the Advantages gained, whatever they were, were too inconſiderable a Recompence for ſuch a noble, well-invented Scheme, as he has given us in the *Scriptures of the New Teſtament*.

'Twas not then for any *Private Intereſt* or *Advantage* aſſignable by us, That any Perſon, who thought fit to conceal himſelf, could frame and contrive the *New Teſtament*; and much leſs can it be ſuppoſed, that a *deſire of Reputation* put him upon ſuch a Work, ſince he has taken ſuch effectual care to ſuppreſs his own Name, and attribute the Glory of his Invention to another.

Nothing therefore remains, but that we ſay 'twas purely *the pleaſure of deceiving*, which occaſioned the writing that Book: But this is as unlikely and inſufficient a Cauſe of ſuch an Effect, as any of the other before mentioned: For the *ſecret Pleaſure of deceiving*, without the *Reputation* which is wont to attend an artful Deceiver, could never work ſo ſtrongly, as to produce any thing of that *excellent Skill* and *Contrivance in the making*, and of ſuch *mighty tendency in the Conſequences* of it as the *Chriſtian Religion* is.

Beſides, when a Man acts for no other End, but to *deceive*, his Deſigns can never be ſuch as ſerve for the procuring and promoting the *benefit of Mankind*. The pleaſure that an ill Man takes

takes in deceiving, is always a *malicious pleaſure*, which is raiſed and heightned by the proſpect either of the *Folly* or *Miſery* of the deceived. Had *ſuch an Impoſtor* as this, contrived the *Chriſtian Religion*, he would never have taken the pains to oblige the World with ſuch a *Rational Scheme* of Life, as was never before exhibited, and could never ſince be mended; he would rather have choſe to triumph over the *Ignorance* and *Credulity* of Mankind by giving them *falſe* and *pernicious Rules of Action*, as well as *monſtrous* and *improbable Articles of Belief*; but thoſe who conſidering the *Chriſtian Facts* and *Doctrines* as meer Impoſture, talk of them under that Style, are forced to allow, that the *Chriſtian Morality*, whether it be of *Humane Invention*, or *Divine Revelation*, is certainly the moſt perfect accompliſh'd Piece that was ever declared to Mankind.

There is no other Motive imaginable *the Author of the New Teſtament*, if it be all a Forgery, could have acted upon; and the inſufficiency of thoſe alledged, has been already ſhewn, and might be further made to appear, if

there were occaſion for ſuch an inlargement; But the abſurdity and impoſſibility of the ſuppoſed Forgery, appearing more plainly from the following Head, I ſhall add but one Argument more for the Confirmation of what I have ſaid very briefly upon this.

Now the Argument I ſhall inſiſt upon, is this; That 'tis utterly inconceivable, that the ſuppoſed *Author* and *Contriver* of that Book, could have imagined that ſuch a Scheme of Things, as we there find delivered, ſhould ever come to be believed and eſtabliſhed in the World; and without ſuch a Thought and Perſwaſion of this in the *Author*, we can never account for either the firſt *Contrivance* or *Publication* of it. Whatever it was that determined him to frame the *Chriſtian Scheme*; whatever End he propoſed to himſelf from his Labour and Skill in making it, he muſt certainly deſign that the whole Fiction ſhould be believed by thoſe it was communicated to; otherwiſe it was impoſſible for him to compaſs the End he aimed at: If therefore 'tis certain, That the *firſt Author* and *Publiſher* of *the Chriſtian Religion* did deſign and intend to have it believed;

and

and if he was a Wiſe, Underſtanding Man, of great Reach and Sagacity, as the Enemies of his Religion allow, and is very evident from that Rational Draught of *Morality* the World is obliged to him for; then does it plainly follow, That *Chriſtianity* is no *Impoſture*, and that the *Books of the New Teſtament* are not *Forged* and *Invented*.

For how was't poſſible for a Wiſe Man to think, that ſuch a Multitude of *ſtrange*, *unheard of Facts* as are Recorded in the *New Teſtament*, and made the Foundation of the *Chriſtian Religion*, ſhould be believed without any manner of Proof, or Evidence, of the Truth of them? But if he did not diſtruſt the credibility of the Facts themſelves, what could induce him to give ſuch a *particular circumſtantial Relation* of them, as ſubmitted them to every Bodies Enquiry and Examination, and made the diſcovery of their Falſhood eaſie and obvious? How could he perſwade himſelf, that ſuch *New* and *Difficult Doctrines* ſhould be entertained, which no former Notions of Learning or Religion, prepared Men to receive, and which no Diſcovery or Revelation could make them fully com-

prehend? And how was it poſſible for him to imagine, That *ſuch Doctrines* and *Facts* as theſe, ſhould ſet off and recommend his *Morality* to the World, which conſidered by it ſelf, is granted to be unexceptionable?

Had the principal Aim and Deſign of this ſuppoſed Impoſtor, been to eſtabliſh the *Chriſtian Morality*, he would rather have Publiſhed it alone, in the Name of ſome admired *Prince* or *Philoſopher*; or have pretended, by ſome ſecret way of conveyance, to have received it from *Heaven*. This, any Man of common Senſe, would have judged a likelier Method of getting it believed, than the mixing and blending ſo many *ſtrange Facts* and *Doctrines* amongſt it, and laying the whole Work upon ſuch a Foundation as he knew had no manner of Support from *Reality*.

And, on the other ſide, had it been his chief Intention to abuſe the Credulity of Mankind, by making them believe ſo many ſtrange and unaccountable Lyes, as are contained in the *Hiſtory* and *peculiar Doctrines* of *Chriſtianity*, if they are all Falſe, he would have taken care to have made his *Morality* more eaſie and palatable

ble, and more ſuited to the common Prejudices and Inclinations of the generality of Mankind, that ſo the other parts of the Scheme might have been taken down readily, and without Examination, for the ſake of this.

But taking the *Chriſtian Religion altogether*, as we now find it, 'tis not to be imagined, that a Wiſe Man ſhould believe he was able to bring People over to imbrace it, ſuppoſing it purely an *Invention* of his own, which he knew had no Foundation in *true Facts*: And therefore there could be *no End* or *Motive* ſufficient to Influence him to contrive what he could not believe would ever be received ſo far, as to anſwer any End propoſed.

But, ſuppoſing it poſſible that there ſhould have been ſome Man, who was Wiſe enough to *invent* the *whole Chriſtian Scheme*, as we now find it in the *Scriptures of the New Teſtament*, and who was at the ſame time ſo abſurdly fooliſh, as to think it would be *believed* ſo far, as to recompence him for the pains of making, and the hazard of Publiſhing it: Suppoſing, I ſay, all this, which to me is perfectly unconceivable, yet the *Books of*

the New Teſtament could not be forged: Becauſe,

2. If the *Principal Matters of Fact* contained in the *New Teſtament*, both *Common* and *Extraordinary*, had not been true, 'twould have been utterly *impoſſible*, that *the Chriſtian Religion* ſhould *ever* have been *believed* and *propagated* in the World, in the manner we find it is at preſent; which I ſhall endeavour to prove in the following Method.

That the *Chriſtian Religion*, ſuch as we find delivered in the *Books of the New Teſtament*, is *at preſent* own'd and *profeſs'd* in a great part of the World; and that, where-ever this Religion is profeſs'd, thoſe Books are appeal'd to as the *Rule* and *Standard* of it, as to every thing therein contained, are Truths I ſhall take for granted.

It is likewiſe as evident, that there was a Time when there were no ſuch *Books*, or *Religion* known or heard of.

The inquiry then will be *when*, and *how*, the Chriſtian Religion came to be Eſtabliſh'd in the World? In anſwer to which, it muſt be allowed, that either the *Books of the New Teſtament* were written

firſt,

firſt, and the *Chriſtian Religion* Propagated from them; or the Doctrines therein contained, were ſpread firſt by Preaching and Converſation, and afterwards committed to Writing: But whichſoever of theſe Suppoſitions we take, the Publication of the *Chriſtian Hiſtory*, and the *Doctrines* built upon it, cannot poſſibly be placed above the Times mentioned in *the New Teſtament*; becauſe there are abundance of Names, and other Circumſtances allowed to be true, which could not be known before without *a Spirit of Prophecy*, which *Impoſture* has nothing to do with.

In the Account the *New Teſtament* gives of this Matter, the firſt Scene of the *Impoſture*, if the *Chriſtian Religion* be accounted ſuch, is laid at *Jeruſalem*, in the time of *Tiberius Ceſar*, and conſequently the Period fix'd upon for firſt acquainting the World with what is pretended to have happen'd then at *Jeruſalem* muſt be *at*, or *near* that time, or at *ſome diſtance ſince*. Let us conſider this great Event in all theſe different Periods, and ſee what the Succeſs will be.

In the firſt place then, let us ſuppoſe the *Chriſtian Religion* Invented and Publiſhed at

at *Jeruſalem* in the *Reign of Tiberius Ceſar*: 'Tis plain the way of Propagating the belief of it muſt have been by *Writing* or *Preaching*; if the Work was begun by Writing, it muſt be by ſome of the *Goſpels*, none of the other Books of the *New Teſtament* can be pretended to be then Written without Prophecy: But whether it were by one or more of the Goſpels, or by Preaching the things contained in them, 'twas abſolutely impoſſible ſuch a Scheme of Falſhood ſhould be *believed* by thoſe who by an Infallible Conſciouſneſs muſt know it to be ſo; or be *ſpread*, *propagated* and *defended* by thoſe who did not believe it themſelves, in places where every body was as capable and certain a Judge of the Cheat as they.

Was not there ſuch a Man as *Chriſt*? Did he not, in all appearance maintain ſuch a *Character*? Did he not pretend to ſuch *Diſcoveries*, and *Wonderful Works*, and did he not really *Suffer* ſuch things upon account of his Pretences, as we find Recorded in thoſe Books call'd the *Goſpels*? All this muſt be granted in the preſent Suppoſition, which fixes the *real Publication* of that Religion, we now profeſs, *at the ſame date* we find mentioned in the

New

New Teſtament: And if it be allowed that *theſe Facts* were true, then does it certainly follow that all the *Pretences* of *Chriſt* were *real*, for otherwiſe they could never have been believed, as has been ſufficiently proved already, and will more fully appear under another Head, where I ſhall ſhew the *neceſſary Connexion* betwixt the truth of the *Common* and the *Extraordinary* Facts mentioned in the *New Teſtament*. But if theſe Common Matters of Fact juſt now inſtanced in were falſe as well as the other, then muſt the whole Story be much more Ridiculous and Incredible.

If the *Forgery* be dated about Forty Years lower at ſome time *near the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem*, then muſt we take in the *Acts of the Apoſtles* and the *other Books* of the *New Teſtament* into our Account, which will render the difficulty of believing *the Chriſtian Religion* much greater: For here we have abundance of *New* Matters of Fact to believe *as ſtrange* as thoſe in the *Goſpels*, and *as eaſie to be known* and *diſproved*, but vaſtly *more Numerous*, and *more Publick*, to the truth of which a great many more Cities and Nations are brought in as Witneſſes, all which are ſuppoſed falſe and conſequently could

could never obtain Credit in the World *at that time.*

If the *Christian Religion* was not heard of any where, till *some time after the Destruction of Jerusalem*, how could it possibly be then believed, when its chief Pretence was, that it had been *Published*, *Believed*, and *Established* in *many places long before*, which was palpably and notoriously false? Now that this must be the Pretence upon which the *Christian Religion* was first Founded, whatever Period we suppose, this Event happen'd in *after the Destruction of Jerusalem*, is very plain from the *Nature of the Religion* its self, and the *Manner of its Publication*, which are intirely built upon *Matters of Fact*; so that if the *History of Christianity*, or the *Principal Matters of Fact* contained in the *New Testament* are false, *the whole Religion* must fall: And the *Nature* of those *Facts* 'tis built upon is such, that 'tis impossible for any body to believe them at any distance from the time in which they are affirmed to happen, if they were then first invented, when he is required to believe them.

For, let us fix the Period when we will, how can we imagine that the *History* contained in the *Books of the New Testamen*

should

ſhould be believed by thoſe who are ſuppoſed to live after the Times of all the Tranſactions therein mention'd, and yet who had never before heard or read of any of them? Can it poſſibly be thought, that any People would change their Laws and Religion upon ſuch a Story as this, without enquiring into the truth of it? And how could they be ſatisfied upon enquiry when the ſuppoſition of an Impoſture makes all other Information, but that of the Publiſhers utterly impoſſible? And what reaſon could there be to believe him, who gives only a poſitive bare Relation of Matter of Fact, done before his time, which he delivers without any pretence to *Revelation* himſelf, and without any Authority but his own to confirm the truth of what he endeavours to impoſe upon the World? Would not theſe have been every Man's Queſtions? Why was not the Religion now offered to us imbraced when it was firſt preſcribed to Mankind, with all thoſe wonderful Evidences of its *Divine Original* we are told of? Why were not thoſe ſtrange Facts believed by thoſe that were the immediate Witneſſes of them? If they were, and if the *Chriſtian Religion* ſpread

ſpread and increaſed upon the Credit of them (as is affirmed, and if the Miracles were true, muſt needs be allow'd) How came it to paſs that neither We nor our Forefathers ever heard of theſe things, and that we have no Hiſtory or Monuments of them remaining? How ſhould ſuch a New Religion as this, Eſtabliſh'd upon the evidence of Senſe, and Propagated by vaſt Multitudes of Profeſſors, be quite loſt and worn out of the memory of Men already? How came you that Publiſh it to be the only Perſon that could recover the Knowledge of it? What reaſon have you now to believe what has been laid aſide by thoſe, who, by being nearer the Original, were better Judges of the truth of it? And what Authority have you to receive it, and enjoyn Mankind the belief of it? Theſe were Queſtions which an Impoſtor could never give any Anſwer to; and without ſatisfaction in theſe Matters, ſo great and wiſe a part of Mankind as are now, and were formerly throughly perſwaded of the truth of the *Chriſtian Religion* could not voluntarily lay aſide all their ancient Prejudices and Ingagements, and imbrace a *New Religion*, with all the dangerous Conſequences

Conſequences that they knew muſt attend ſuch a change.

It is therefore manifeſtly abſurd, to ſuppoſe there ever were any Men Fooliſh and Impudent enough to Publiſh a falſe Hiſtory of Matters of Fact, pretended to be done juſt before the Publication, and in the very Place where the Scene is laid, within the immediate Cognizance of all the People to whom the Relation is directed; and if there were any ſuch Pretenders, 'tis impoſſible to think there ſhould be any People ſo Stupid, as to believe they themſelves ſaw and heard ſuch Things as were never ſaid or done among them, and this purely upon the Information of others, without which they had remained intirely ignorant of them; from whence it neceſſarily follows, that *the Chriſtian Scheme* could not be Publiſhed *at the Time 'tis dated at*, if it were meer *Forgery* and *Invention.*

It is likewiſe very ridiculous and irrational to imagine, that a long ſeries of *Publick Notorious Facts*, ſaid to be done in the preſence of great Multitudes of all ſorts of Perſons in different Countries and Nations; the Conſequences of which, are pretended to be very great and

and concerning to all Mankind; and which, by the Credit they had obtained, and the Oppoſition that had been made to them, had occaſioned mighty Changes and Alterations in the World: 'Tis very abſurd, I ſay, to maintain that ſuch Facts as theſe, which never happen'd at all, ſhould at any diſtance, from the Time in which they are pretended to have happen'd, ever come to be generally believed, in, or near thoſe Places they are appropriated to, barely upon the Authority of their Publication; when thoſe that were ſuppoſed to believe them, can have no other Reaſon for their Faith but this, That ſome body had the confidence to Publiſh a ſtrange, unheard of Story: And if there be any abſurdity in this ſuppoſition, 'tis impoſſible the *Chriſtian Religion* ſhould have been firſt Promulg'd *any time after* the Period aſſign'd for its Publication in the *New Teſtament*; becauſe it was impoſſible it ſhould ever have been believed, as it now is, if it had.

A great deal more might be ſaid to prove the *Chriſtian Religion* no *Impoſture*, and to expoſe the groſs abſurdity of ſuch a Suppoſition; but I do not think it neceſſary

ceſſary to inlarge upon this Point, both becauſe I have, in a great meaſure, prevented my ſelf in the direct Proofs I have before given of the Truth of the *Chriſtian Religion*; which, with a different manner of Application, would ſerve the ſame purpoſe here; and becauſe this is thought, by the *Enemies of Chriſtianity* themſelves, too weak a Poſt to defend, and is rarely inſiſted upon by them, any further than as *Trick*, *Cheat*, and *Impoſture* are odious diſcrediting Names, which ſerve to blacken the Cauſe they want Arguments to overthrow.

The chief ſtrength of *Modern Infidelity*, or, as its Favourers and Profeſſors delight to call it, *Deiſm*, conſiſts in a great many looſe Objections, levelled againſt ſomething or other in the *Scriptures*, without any *certain aim*, without any relation to a *Scheme* or *Hypotheſis* to account for all ſtanding Appearances, and without any regular Deduction of *Conſequences* from what is Objected, or *Anſwer* to contrary Proofs.

But, before I enter upon a particular Examination of theſe Objections, it is to

be obſerved, that they are directed indifferently againſt any part of the *Scriptures* of the *Old* or *New Teſtament*; and therefore I ſhall think my ſelf obliged to conſider them only ſo far as they are made uſe of, or intended to leſſen the certainty of *Divine Revelation in General*, or of the truth either of the *Jewiſh* or *Chriſtian Religion*, both which we pretend, and undertake to maintain, *did come from God.*

I have not indeed given a particular Proof of the *Jewiſh Revelation*, becauſe it is ſuppoſed in the *Chriſtian*, and confirmed by it; and therefore what proves the Latter muſt eſtabliſh the Former: But if any Man will take a ſhort view of the *Jewiſh Revelation*, as we find it delivered in the Books of the *Old Teſtament*, and impartially conſider the *Nature*, *Variety* and *Number* of the *Facts* there Recorded; the *Relation* and *Connexion* they have to one another; the *Time* and *Manner* in which they were Recorded; the *Ways* and *Methods* of preſerving the memory of them; together with the *Characters* and *Circumſtances* of all the *Perſons* concern'd in them; He will never be able to doubt but the *Principal Matters of Fact*

Fact mentioned in the *Old Testament* were true; it being impossible to conceive they should have been *Forged*, either *altogether* or *separately*, since they are the Foundations of all the *Jewish Religion* and *Policy*, and are of such a nature that we cannot suppose any time when the *Forgery* should begin without a discovery of it; which would appear more evidently if we applied all the *Characters* of *Truth* and *Divinity*, remarkable in the *Christian Revelation* to the *Jewish*; but such a Repetition being altogether unnecessary in its self, and without the bounds of my Present Subject, I shall immediately proceed to examine the *Deist's* Objections to *Scripture* and *Revelation.*

Now the summ of what they have to say, which has not been already particularly considered, tends to shew that the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* mentioned in the *Scriptures* (allowing the Accounts there given of the Facts to be true) are no Proofs of a *Divine Revelation*; and that there are a great many such Faults observable in the *other parts of Scripture* as prove the whole to be a pure *Humane Composure.*

What they object againſt *Miracles* being uſed as an Argument to prove a Doctrine *Revealed from God* is, that it Derogates from the *Nature* and *Perfection* of *God* to work *Miracles*; and that the *Regular Frame of the World*, with a conſtant unalterable Connexion of Cauſes and Effects in it, gives us a truer and juſter Idea of God, and is a better Argument of his Being, than any *Extraordinary Interpoſition of Providence*, which alters and perverts the courſe of Nature: To which I anſwer.

Firſt, That I cannot ſee how it Derogates from *God*, to ſuppoſe his immediate Interpoſition in ſome Caſes, or how his working of *Miracles* is a perverting of the Courſe of Nature, any more than it Derogates from the *Soul*, or the Soul perverts the Courſe of Nature, when by a Thought it changes or ſtops the Motion of the Animal Spirits, which according to their uſual courſe would have moved otherwiſe: When the Soul exerciſes this Power over the Body, the Sinews and Bones continue as they were, and ſo do the bulk and principal parts of *Nature* for all *Miracles*. God does not order Men to be born of Beaſts, nor change Beaſts into

into Men, nor create New Suns, nor annihilate any Syſtems of Matter to work Miracles; but by a Thought he ſeparates or unites the inſenſible parts of Matter, he ſtops, retards, or quickens their Motion, or alters their Figures: This is God's common Method of working Miracles.

But, in the next place, what if we ſhould ſay that God did every thing by an *immediate Will?* What if we affirm'd that he often Created ſome Beings and Deſtroyed others, that he changed the Laws of Motion, and ſuſpended the Effects of it? None of theſe ways of acting can Derogate from God, foraſmuch as they cannot be proved, either to *imply a Contradiction* in themſelves, to be *inconſiſtent with the Happiniſs of God*, or to be *repugnant to the Goodneſs or Juſtice of his Dealings* with his *Intelligent Creatures.* Theſe are the true and only *Meaſures* of all the other Notions we frame of the *Perfections of the Divine Nature:* And therefore when we ſay *God* cannot act *contrary to Nature*, we muſt mean it in one of theſe Senſes, either that he cannot act what is a *Contradiction in it ſelf*, or what is *contrary to his own Nature*, or to the *Nature* he has

given his *Intelligent Creatures:* But when any Changes or Alterations in *Material Beings*, conſiſtent with the fore-mention'd Principles are ſaid to be *contrary to Nature*, that is only a popular Expreſſion which ſignifies that the courſe of things is different from what it conſtantly appeared to us before: but no colour of reaſon can poſſibly be given either from the *Properties of Body*, or the *Conſtancy of Appearance*, why ſuch a change ſhould not be made by *God*.

That *Miracles* are not, in their own Nature, a better proof of the *Being of God*, than the *ſtanding Frame* and *regular Order* and *Diſpoſition of things* is certain; but if the generality of Men are apt to *forget God*, notwithſtanding they are ſurrounded with ſo many viſible Evidences of his Being, Why is it not agreeable to the *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* of God to raiſe and excite their Attention by new and ſurprizing Manifeſtations of his *Power*; the impreſſion of which would be much livelier and ſtronger than thoſe they received from a conſtant Repetition of the ſame appearances? But 'tis not to prove a *God* or *Providence*, or the *firſt General Principles* of *Natural Religion*, that *Miracles* are

are urged; theſe things are all ſo plain and eaſie, without ſuch a confirmation, that they are altogether without excuſe who do not believe them or act contrary to their belief; but when Men are *loſt* and *gone out of the way*, and are *become altogether Corrupt*; when *through Blindneſs* and *Ignorance* they know not how to *ſerve God aright*, and when thoſe who uſe their endeavours to do it can have no aſſurance of being accepted; if in compaſſion to this ſad and diſtreſſed Eſtate of Mankind God is pleaſed to *reveal* himſelf to them, and acquaint them with a true and certain way to Happineſs, which they were not able to find out of themſelves, what Perfections of God is it contrary to to make ſuch a diſcovery to his Creatures? And how could he take a more effectual way to convince themof the truth of the *Revelation* than by *Miracles*, which are *real Effects* of *Divine Power*, and which Men are readily diſpoſed to acknowledge as Infallible *Signs* and *Indications* of it? If theſe were the *Works of God*, and might certainly be known to be ſo, as has already been proved in the former part of this Diſcourſe, then were they very fit and proper Proofs that the Doctrine they

were intended to comfirm *came from God*, though they were not brought about by an *immediate Interpoſition*, but were part of the *General Scheme of Nature*. And therefore, though it ſhould be allowed to be a Derogation to God to make him the Author of thoſe Works we call *Miracles*, by a *preſent and immediate exerciſe of his Power*; yet it can be no diminution to any of his Perfections to affirm, that *originally* at the beginning of the World, he ordered ſuch Effects to proceed from the *General Laws of Nature*, at ſuch a time, that they might be for *Signs* and *Tokens* to Mankind, that the *Revelation* which ſhould then be given them came from him.

Another Objection made to the Argument of *Miracles* is, that *Miracles* have been wrought by other Men, as well as *Moſes* and *Chriſt*, and as great as thoſe that were Recorded of them; from whence it is inferred, that the *Doctrines* they taught are never the truer for their Working Miracles: To which I Anſwer, that the *Matter of Fact* is *none of it ſufficiently atteſted*; a *great deal* of it manifeſtly *falſe*; and were it all true, the

the *Inference* drawn from it *does not hold.*

To make good this Charge, I shall instance in the *Miracles* attributed to *Vespasian* and *Apollonius Tyanæus*, which have been particularly made use of by the Enemies of our *Religion* to lessen the Credit and Authority of it.

Of *Vespasian* it is Recorded, That he once cured two Blind Men; but the strange and wonderful Works of *Apollonius*, fill a Book writ on purpose to give an account of them. Now as to *Vespasian*'s Cure of the Blind, 'tis but one *single Miracle*, and therefore is very unjustly compared with that *Multitude of mighty Works* that were wrought by the Hands of *Christ*; neither is it so well attested, but Reasons may be given why it should be false, notwithstanding the reality of all the appearing Circumstances of it: Several Inducements might be alledged, that very probably disposed this Emperor to pretend to such a Miracle; 'tis very easie to conceive how his Design might be brought about in the Presence of a great many People without their discovering the Cheat; and, should any have found it out, 'tis very

very obvious to imagine why they did not Publiſh it: But nothing of all this would hold when applied to Chriſt, had he pretended to no more than the Cure of two Blind Men: A Man of his Character and Condition in the World, could not promiſe himſelf any Honour, Reſpect, or Advantage from ſuch a Pretence; and ſhould he have made this uſe of it, he would very probably have raiſed the Envy of all the People of the ſame Rank, and the Jealouſie of his Superiors; upon theſe, and other Motives, as well as Natural Curioſity, a great many would have been very Induſtrious and Inquiſitive in ſearching into the Truth of the Fact; and whom can we imagine ſo far concern'd for ſuch a Pretender, as to be privy or aſſiſting to his Cheat at the firſt, or to conceal his ſhame after they had found it out: But, ſuppoſing an Account could be given in one or two Inſtances, how 'twas poſſible for *Chriſt* to pretend to ſuch Works as were never done; there are abundance ſtill remaining upon Record, that are manifeſtly incapable of ſuch a Solution; which puts an unanſwerable difference betwixt *the Miracles of Chriſt*, and the *Pretences of other Men.*

As

As to the Story of *Apollonius*, the whole Credit of it depends upon the Teſtimony of one ſingle Author, who lived too long after him to be a competent Witneſs of the Truth of what he Relates, and was too Credulous and Partial to be believed if he had lived at the ſame time with him. The ſtrange unuſual Things Related to have been done by this *Apollonius*, bear no Proportion to the Miracles of *Chriſt*, either as to the *Number* of the Facts and Perſons concern'd in them; the Wonderful and Extraordinary *Nature* of them, the beneficial Deſign of them, or the publick and hazardous *Manner* in which they were done; and a great many of theſe have been proved to be falſe upon examination, from the manifeſt inconſiſtencies and contradictions in the Relation of them.

But ſuppoſing the Miracles attributed to *Veſpaſian* and *Apollonius* were *true in Fact*, what Reaſons can we alledge, either from the *Characters* of the pretended *Authors*, the *Ends* and *Deſigns* they acted upon, the *Conſequences* and *Effects* of the Pretences, or from any other *Circumſtances* of their Story, that the ſtrange Things Recorded

Recorded of them, were not done by the Miniſtry of *Evil Spirits?*

Let us ſuppoſe farther, That the Facts were not only *real*, but true and proper *Miracles*, performed by the *expreſs* and *immediate Aſſiſtance of God*; What can be inferred from thence? Not that the *Heathen Religion* was true; becauſe theſe Miracles were not deſign'd or intended for a Confirmation of it: Not that the *Chriſtian Religion* was purely *Humane*; becauſe the whole End of *Chriſt*'s working Miracles was to prove that his *Doctrine came from God.* There may be ſeveral Reaſons given why it may pleaſe *God* ſometimes to work Miracles indifferently by the Hands of *good* or *ill* Men, Men of a *true* or *falſe Religion*; but it cannot poſſibly be ſuppoſed of God, that he ſhould imploy Good Men, or concur with the Wicked, in working Miracles, in order to their *deceiving Mankind*, and eſtabliſhing a Lye by ſuch Evidence as cannot be diſproved; and no Inſtance can be given where any one *true Miracle* was wrought by a Perſon that made uſe of it to prove any other Doctrine by, than what we have delivered in the *Scriptures.* By a *true Miracle* I mean ſuch as is *as well*

atteſted

atteſted to have been done as thoſe Recorded in the Scriptures, and can *no more be accounted for*, without the *Power of God*, than they can; many of which I will allow to have been done upon other occaſions, without any Application of them to the advantage of the *Religion* of thoſe that performed them.

'Tis true indeed many *Signs* and *Wonders* may have been wrought for the Confirmation of falſe Doctrines, and may have deceived many whom Simplicity and Bigotry to the Cauſe they made for diſpoſed to entertain them; but we have no Records of any ſuch ill-intended Miracles left, which by the *Nature*, *Circumſtances*, *Effects*, or *Atteſtation* of them, can diſpoſe a rational Man to aſcribe them to *God*. And, whatever Pretences of this kind there may have been, 'tis a very good Argument that the World can diſtinguiſh betwixt the *wonderful Works of God*, and the *little Feats of Men* and *Evil Spirits*; That there are now no Opinions or Doctrines whatſoever remaining, beſides what are contained in the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian Revelations*; nor any particular Explications of, or Deductions from them, which were at firſt

Believed

Believed and Propagated upon the Strength and Authority of *ſtrange* and *wonderful* Facts *publickly* and *really* done for that end.

The next Intimation made uſe of to overthrow the Truth of the *Scripture-Revelation* concerns the *Prophecies* which make a great part of it: And this, as well as the firſt Objection againſt *Miracles*, is wholly new, the Invention of theſe latter Days, wherein the Improvements of rational Knowledge have forced the Patrons of Irreligion upon new Abſurdities. Now the Argument, as far as 'tis capable of being expreſſed in ſuch a form, is this, That the *Prophecies of the Old Teſtament*, upon which the *Chriſtian Religion* is principally built, proceeded from Impreſſions made upon the *Imaginations* of the *Prophets*; which Impreſſions were always agreeable to their ſeveral *Tempers*, *Complexions* and *Opinions*; from whence it muſt be inferr'd that ſuch Viſionary Scenes, and Figurative Expreſſions as theſe Prophecies are delivered in, could be attributed to *God* only in a *popular way*, as all other extraordinary and unuſual Events were, and therefore cannot be made

made uſe of to prove a *Divine Revelation*, becauſe they proceeded wholly from *Natural Cauſes* though unknown to us.

But, whatever of this nature is advanced by *Spinoza*, or whatever Inferences are drawn from it by others, who apply it further than he durſt openly aſſert, nothing can be concluded from his Account of *Prophecy* to the Prejudice of the *Scripture-Revelation*; were all his Obſervations upon this Subject true, as 'tis manifeſt to any one that reads the Bible, they are not. For ſuppoſing all he ſays upon this Head were true, *viz.* That the *Prophets* were Perſons of *livelier Imaginations* than others, (as 'tis plain of ſome of them that they were not) That the *Angry*, *Chearful* or *Melancholy Prophet* always Propheſied things *ſuitable to his particular Temper* (as there are ſeveral Inſtances to be given to the contrary) and that the *Jews* had a pious way of *Attributing every thing ſtrange or unuſual to God*, &c. What if all theſe things were ſo as *Spinoza* obſerves? The Knowledge which theſe Angry, Chearful, *&c.* Prophets, of lively Imaginations had of *Future Things* muſt be allowed to *come from God*, in a *different manner* from that whereby they received

received all their other Knowledge, as *Spinoza* himſelf plainly owns; and if it be ſo, 'tis a very good Argument that the *Doctrines* Preached by thoſe Prophets were delivered to them *by God* alſo, *in the ſame way* that their *Prophecies* were; which is ſufficient to inforce the *Obligation* of them upon us, whatever *Natural Cauſes* God was pleaſed to make uſe of in the *Revelation*; and that is all we contend for, or are concern'd to maintain.

This is all that either the *Ancient* or *Modern Enemies* of the *Chriſtian Religion* had, or can have to object to the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *Bible*; excepting what has been already Anſwered in the direct proof that was given of the Truth of them.

The other parts of Scripture are charged with almoſt all the Faults which any *Humane Writing* is capable of, *viz.*

Contradictions to Reaſon and Philoſophy.

Contradictions of one part to another.

Miſtakes as to the Authors of the Books, Connexion of the Parts, Chronology, Geography, *&c.*

Ridiculous and Improbable Stories.

Abſurd

Abſurd and Irrational Laws and Injunctions.

Trifling and Impertinent Reaſons and Arguments.

Low and Unartful Language.

The Injuſtice of which Objections I ſhall ſhew very briefly, as lying very open and obvious.

As to *Contradictions to Reaſon and Philoſophy* pretended to be in the *Scriptures*, no body has been acute enough yet, or ſufficiently inſtructed in the true Syſtem of things to make good this Charge. We have lived to ſee ſeveral *New Schemes*, *Hypotheſes* and *Theories* of the World Confuted and Exploded; but the *Plaineſt*, *Simpleſt*, and *moſt Demonſtrative Account of Nature* that is now extant, is found to be the *moſt agreeable to Scripture*, and anſwers all the Ancient Blaſphemies againſt *Providence* which were grounded upon falſe Hypotheſes then in Reputation.

But, after all, the *Scriptures* were not written to teach us *Philoſophy*: If this had been the Deſign of them, no doubt but we had had a *truer Scheme of Knowledge* than any Philoſopher has been yet able to give us; but then 'tis certain we ſhould have

had *much leſs Religion*, if that and our *Philoſophy* had been revealed to us together.

Had the *Language of Scripture* been every where adapted to the *true Nature of Things*, 'tis hard to conceive how it ſhould ever have come to be believed. For, ſuppoſing theſe Notions to be true; That *the Earth moves*; That the *Sun is a Hundred thouſand times bigger than the Earth*; That *the Moon and the other Planets are inhabited*; That *Beaſts are ſenſeleſs Machines, and meer Clock-work*, and the like: And ſuppoſing all the popular Expreſſions of *Scripture* concerning ſuch Matters were changed, and ſuited to theſe Notions, would not all the *Learned* part of Mankind, who lived before theſe new Diſcoveries in *Nature* were made, have been apt to reject the whole *Revelation* as abſurd, and unphiloſophical? But if ſome of the Learned had been ſo ſenſible of their Ignorance of *Nature* and the *Power of God*, as to make all the *Prejudices of their Reaſon*, Submit to their *Faith*, 'tis hardly poſſible to imagine how *the People* ſhould ever have been induced to believe ſuch Opinions as ſhock thoſe *Common Natural* Notions they have of Things, which come to them without teaching, and Opinions

that

that will always ſeem to contradict their *Senſes*. The greateſt Evidence of *Miracles* would not be ſufficient to convince the People of the Truth of ſuch Notions as thoſe before-mention'd; for though ſtrange and wonderful Things which they *actually* and *certainly perceive* come to paſs, may ſatisfie them, that as ſtrange Things as theſe *may happen hereafter*; yet even ſuch Signs and Wonders as theſe which they *ſee*, can hardly be ſuppoſed to convince them, that there are *at preſent* other ſtrange Things which they *do not ſee*, and which they believe their *Senſes* as capable Judges of, as of thoſe which they *do ſee*.

But whether the *Scriptures* were believed in this Caſe by few or more, thoſe who had not been diſpoſed to like them, would have had greater, and more unanſwerable Objections to make to them from *Reaſon and Philoſophy*, than our preſent Unbelievers have: How could a faithful Chriſtian who lived before *Copernicus* and *Des Cartes* have defended the *Philoſophy of the Scriptures* againſt ſuch as rejected the forementioned Notions, and expoſed them as ridiculous and abſurd? The bare Authority of the *Revelation* without the

Aſſiſtance of all our Modern *Experiments* and *Obſervations*, would have been leſs effectual to convince Gainſayers *then*, than it is *now*; becauſe the Opinions *contrary* to the *Doctrines of Scripture* then would have been more eaſie and popular, than thoſe *contained in Scripture*; and therefore if the *Scripture Notions* were not true, no Reaſon could be given why they ſhould be there: For it could not *then* be ſaid, as it is very juſtly and properly *now* in ſeveral Caſes, that the *Expreſſions of Scripture* were ſuited to the common Notions of the People who were to read them: from whence it follows, that the *appearing Falſhood* of the Opinions above-mentioned, if they had been found in *Scripture*, would have been a more puzling Objection to the Chriſtians of former Times, than the *allowed Falſhood* of the Common Vulgar Notions of Philoſophy, which the *Scriptures* are at preſent charg'd with, can be to us.

And what we ſuppoſe of the *Times before Copernicus*, would hold good of the *preſent* upon the like Tryal: For it is not to be conteſted, but there are a great many other true Notions in *Philoſophy* hitherto unknown to us, which upon the

firſt

firſt diſcovery, would appear as ſhocking, and contrary to all our former Knowledge, as *the Motion of the Earth*, *the Planetary Worlds*, &c. did to our Predeceſſors; and were theſe delivered in our *Bibles*, as we have ſuppoſed the other to be, they would furniſh as much matter of Cavil to our Modern, and all ſucceeding *Scepticks*, as thoſe would have done to the Philoſophers of former Ages, till further Experience had reconciled them to their Reaſon; which could never be expected in all Points: For, had every Thing *the Scripture* has occaſion to mention, been expreſſed according to the *true Philoſophy* of it, the whole Race of Mankind could never make *Experiments* and *Obſervations* enough to ſatisfie themſelves of the Truth of all the *Scripture-Notions*, without the *Authority of the Revelation*, as long as the World indures.

But beſide this *general Defence* of the *Philoſophy of Scripture*, it may be ſaid, that ſeveral ſeeming *Contradictions to Reaſon*, which the Enemies of our Religion have laid a great ſtreſs upon, have been proved to be *true* and *conſiſtent* by Learned Men, and ſome of them that were capable of it, *Mathematically demonſtrated*? As

particularly the *Capacity of Noah's Ark.*

The ſame Thing may be anſwered to the next Objections made to *Scripture*, viz. That ſeveral Places which ſeem'd to contradict one another, have been plainly reconciled, and ſeveral things which have been look'd upon as *Miſtakes*, as to the *Authors of the Books*, *Connexion of the Parts*, *Chronology*, *Geography*, &c. have been clearly proved to be none, by thoſe whohave particularly undertook the Examination of theſe Difficulties: And as to thoſe Places which do not admit of ſuch a Solution, all the Faults and Defects they are charged with, are wholly owing to the *Tradition* and *way of Conveyance* which was purely *Humane*, and were not in the *Original Revelation* which we ſay was *Divine*, and have proved to be ſo by many inconteſtable Evidences.

Allowing therefore, that the *Text of the Scriptures*, like that of other Books, hath received ſome alterations by *Time* and *variety of Copies*; That ſome of the Rolls or Sheets of *the Old Teſtament* have been miſplaced; that ſome Things have been inſerted afterwards; Words and Sentences have been left out, Letters have been changed, and other Miſtakes have

have been made by *Tranſcribers:* That ſome of the Books, or ſome parts of them are aſcribed to wrong Authors; and that it has been much controverted, whether ſome of them ſhould be admitted into the *Canon:* Should we, I ſay, allow all this, I do not ſee what uſe could be made of it, to the prejudice either of the *Truth* or *Divinity* of the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian Revelations.* For *variety of Copies* from whence all the alterations of the *Text* proceed, are a very great Argument of the *Sincerity* and *Importance* of the *Original*, as being the beſt Preſervative againſt all Corruption in the Subſtance and *principal parts* of it: And the *Controverted Books* only ſhew what care and faithful Examination there was of every Book, before it was admitted into the *Canon.*

But, to give all the force and weight to theſe Objections which they can poſſibly have; ſhould we reject all *Controverted Books* and *Paſſages* whatſoever, and ſhould we eſtabliſh *any Reading* we pleaſe where there is variety, only letting the *authentick, undoubted Places* be the Rule of Expoſition to the *doubtful* (than which nothing can be more reaſonable) in this Caſe I dare affirm, that not *one Article of Faith* or

Rule of Practice, or *any of the principal Facts* our Religion is built upon, would be cut off, but might be as evidently proved from *what remains uncontested* as from the whole. It does not therefore follow from those *Changes* and *Alterations* that have crept into the *Scriptures* since they were deposited in the hands of Men to keep, or the *Contests* they have had about the *Authority* of some parts of them, that what remains *unaltered* and *uncontested*, is not *true* and of *Divine Original*; because God has no where promised to exempt the Books, in which his *Revelations* to Man are preserved, from the accidents common to other Books.

Nay further, should we allow what some have the confidence to assert, That the *Sacred Writers themselves* were liable to the same Mistakes as other Men are, in the Relation of Matters of Fact from *their own Memories*, or the *Information of credible Witnesses*; it cannot be concluded from hence, that any of the *principal Facts* which make a necessary part of *our Religion* are false: Because these were all so *very extraordinary* and *notorious*, and so *impossible to be believed*, or pass'd by *without Censure* and *Contradiction*, if they

could

could have been denied, that had the *Authors* of the *Books of Scripture* had *no peculiar Aſſiſtance from God* in the Compoſure of them, we can have no manner of Reaſon to disbelieve or queſtion the Truth of any Thing of the *Subſtance* and *principal Parts* either of the *Hiſtory* or *Doctrine* there delivered: For ſuppoſing thoſe we call the *Sacred Writers* were not *Divinely inſpired* (as we believe they were;) yet were they *capable*, and *faithful Witneſſes* of what they writ; and did not this appear to us from their *Way* and *Manner of Writing*, and from the *Teſtimony of others* concerning them, yet are the Accounts they give us of *ſuch a Nature*, and Writ at *ſuch Times*, that 'tis impoſſible they ſhould ever have been *believed*, if they had not been *true*; from whence it follows, That the *Hiſtory of the Scriptures* muſt be *true*, and the *Doctrines* they contain, *given by Divine Inſpiration*, though the *Perſons* that Recorded the *wonderful Works* and *Revelations of God* were not *Divinely aſſiſted* in the ſame manner in the *Writing*, as they themſelves, or others they write of, were in the firſt *Preaching* and *Publiſhing* the *Will of God*.

As to the remaining Objections to *Scripture*, viz. *Ridiculous* and *Improbable Stories*, *abſurd Laws* and *Injunctions*, *Impertinent Reaſons* and *Arguments*, *low* and *unartful Expreſſions*: All thoſe will admit of one common Anſwer, and are eaſily and juſtly accountable for, from our *Ignorance* of the *Language* in which the *Scriptures*, and eſpecially thoſe of the *Old Teſtament* were writ, *Ancient Cuſtoms* and *Uſages in ſpeaking* and *acting*, and the *Temper* and *Circumſtances* of the *People* where the Things were ſaid and done.

The *Wiſdom* of all *Laws* and *Inſtitutions*, is to be judg'd of by the Temper and Circumſtances of the Perſons for whom they were made, particularly at the Time when they were made.

The *Eloquence* and *Propriety* at all *Diſcourſes*, and the *Force* and *Weight* of *Arguments* depend likewiſe upon the Character of the Perſons the Diſcourſes were directed to, or intended for; and their peculiar Diſpoſition and Circumſtances at ſuch and ſuch Times.

Ridiculous and *abſurd* are *arbitrary* and *relative Terms*, and vary according to the different Notions of the Perſons that uſe them,

them, there being several Things, which to some appear *absurd* and *ludicrous*, which considered by others in different Circumstances, appear *proper* and *grave*.

From these Considerations, might all the particular Things objected under the forementioned Heads be answered, as a great many of them have been already, were we throughly instructed in those Matters which are absolutely necessary, in order to make any Judgment upon the Things in question, which at this distance from the first delivery of them, is in several Cases impossible.

But in defect of such Information as is necessary to give a *clear* and *particular* Account of all the Passages of *Scripture* excepted against by Prophane and Cavilling Men, 'tis sufficient to say *in general* what has been before unanswerably proved, that all the *principal Matters of Fact* Recorded in the *Holy Writings*, upon which the *Certainty of the Revelation*, and the *Obligations of the Religion* therein contained, are founded, are beyond all exception *true*; for the *Authority* of *these*, will bear down and over-rule *all other seeming difficulties* that occur in *Scripture*, which are not manifestly inconsistent with the

the firſt Principles of our Knowledge upon which all our *Faith* as well as *Reaſon* is grounded.

There are ſeveral Relations of Things, in the moſt approved Books, which I ſhould not believe ſo readily if they were not ſupported by the Authority of the reſt: But when I have unqueſtionable proof of the *Veracity* and *Wiſdom* of the Writer in ſome things, I can eaſily believe other things which he ſays muſt be *true* and *wiſe* though they ſeem to me *fooliſh* and *untrue*. And therefore when I am *certainly convinced*, 'tis *God* that ſpeaks, by *Infallible Signs*, and a great part of the Diſcourſe appears to me *worthy of God*, I cannot doubt but all the reſt muſt *proceed from God*, and be *worthy of him*, though it would not appear ſo without this ſupport. Had the *Bible* came down to us with all the exceptionable Stories and Expreſſions put together, without the other parts of it, I could not have perceived it belonged *to God*, without many wonderful Signs to confirm it, and I ſhould have been very diſtruſtful of the Signs; but when I am throughly convinced of the *Authority of a Teſtimony* nothing but a *downright Contradiction* would ſhock my Belief. Did Twelve Men of known Integrity to me,

affirm

affirm they heard an *Aſs* or *Serpent* Speak, or any ſuch thing as is Recorded in *Scriture*, I ſhould believe them without any manner of Scruple or Heſitation; and according to the *Nature* and *Importance* of what was ſaid I ſhould judge it proceeded either from the *ſecret force of Nature*, or from *Evil Spirits*, or from *God*.

If therefore we are ſatisfied by undeniable Arguments, that the *Subſtance* and *Principal parts* of the *Scripture-Hiſtory* are *true*, and conſequently that the *Bible* is the *Word of God*; it neceſſarily follows, that all the queſtionable Places of it are capable of ſuch a Solution as is very conſiſtent with the *Wiſdom* and *Deſigns of God*, and with all the *Principles of our Reaſon*, though we ſhould not be able to give it: And indeed ſuch Anſwers have been already made to ſeveral things which ſeemed moſt liable to Exception, that 'tis very eaſie to conceive how thoſe that are yet unanſwered might be Solved, were we furniſhed with all the Knowledge requiſite for ſuch a Performance: But it has not pleaſed *God* to give us ſuch Light, and it does not ſeem Repugnant to any thing in the *Divine Nature* to deny it us; and therefore the *Difficulties* of *Scri-*

ptur,

pture, as well as thoſe of *Natural Providence*, may be a proper Exerciſe of our *Faith*, but are a very unjuſt and unwarrantable ground of *Infidelity*; ſince in both he has vouchſafed us ſuch plain and certain Manifeſtations of himſelf, as cannot be darkned by all that infinite abyſs of Knowledge which is veiled and concealed from us.

I ſhall not therefore concern my ſelf any further, to give a *particular* Anſwer to the many minute Objections that are made to *Scripture*; becauſe if the Authority of the *Holy Writings* depended upon the *Force* or *Invalidity* of *theſe Objections*, in order to prove the Truth of thoſe Writings, every one of them muſt be diſtinctly and ſatisfactorily Anſwered; and that is plainly impoſſible, by reaſon that they cannot *all* receive their proper Solutions without a through inſight into the whole compaſs of *Humane Knowledge*, which no Man, or Generation of Men, is capable of; and without ſuch a Penetration into the *Ways* and *Deſigns of God* as is not attainable but by *Revelation*.

But if it be urged that there are *ſome particular Objections* which do *of themſelves*, without the aſſiſtance of any other Arguments,

guments, overthrow the *Credit* and *Authority* of the *Scriptures*, theſe having been never yet alledged, 'tis time enough to give an Anſwer to them when the whole Cauſe is put upon that Iſſue.

But, beſides all this, a *particular* Anſwer to *all* or *any* Objections is a needleſs trouble, becauſe the proof that has been given of the *Chriſtian Revelation* is *ſufficient* to Eſtabliſh the Authority of it, notwithſtanding any Objection that can be made to the *Books of Scripture*; which I ſhall endeavour more fully to make out under the next General Head of Diſcourſe.

IV. Forurthly then I ſhall ſhew the *Sufficiency* of ſuch a Proof as has before been given by *Matters of Fact*, to induce us to believe the *Chriſtian Religion*, and render us inexcuſable if we do not.

Now the *Matters of Fact* I have undertook to prove, lying out of the reach of our *own preſent Perceptions* and *Memories*, and being not Communicated to us by *Immediate Revelation from God*, we can be informed and aſſured of the truth of them no

no other way than by *Humane Teſtimony*; *the Connexion of preſent Appearances with former*; and from the *Nature of things* either *in General*, or the *Particular Facts* in Queſtion. If therefore it can be ſhewn that thoſe Matters of Fact which make up the *Chriſtian Hiſtory*, and upon which the *Chriſtian Religion* is Founded, are as well *atteſted* as any other diſtant Facts whatſoever; that there is as neceſſary a *Connexion* betwixt them and the preſent ſtate of things in the World, as betwixt the preſent and any former Appearances; and that we have as much aſſurance both from the *Nature of things in General*, and *theſe in Particular*, that they are true, as we can have that any thing elſe is ſo at a diſtance from us: If, I ſay, it can be ſhewn that the Proof before given anſwers all theſe Characters, then does it evidently follow, that there is as much reaſon to believe the *Chriſtian Religion*, as there can poſſibly be to believe *any Matters of Fact* out of the Notice and *Obſervation of the Living*; and that there are ſome ſuch *Matters of Fact* as theſe, which deſerve our aſſent to them, as well as any Truths concerning the *real Nature* of things, cannot be queſtioned.

1. *Firſt*

1. *Firſt*, Then as to *Humane Teſtimony*; What *true Matters of Fact* are there now believed in the World which are better atteſted than the *Chriſtian* are? There is no Hiſtory of former Times, now extant, confirm'd by ſuch a *Cloud of Witneſſes*, and there never were any Witneſſes of ſuch unqueſtionable *Characters*.

We have a great many Authors now extant, who had themſelves a Principal Concern in the Tranſactions they write of; They were all Perſons of great Probity and Integrity, of a diſintereſſed, undeſigning Simplicity of Manners, Men without Guile, and without Deceit; They were bred up in a different Religion from that they Recommended in their Writings; They were very much Prejudiced againſt the Pretences of their Maſter who came to inſtruct them in it; They were ſlow to believe the Account he gave of Himſelf and the *Goſpel* he Preached; and the Meanneſs and Poverty of his Condition while he Lived, the Scandal of his Death, and the many Afflictions and Dangers his Diſciples and Followers were expoſed to after his

Death, were very great Diſcouragements from imbracing his Doctrine.

The *Hiſtory* theſe Perſons acquaint us with, conſiſts of ſuch a multiplicity of Publick Notorious Facts, ſo eaſie to be known, ſo curious to be enquired into, and of ſuch vaſt Conſequence and Importance for all Perſons to be rightly imform'd in, that every body might have diſproved them if they had been Falſe, and every body that did not believe them would have thought himſelf concern'd to have done it if he could.

After theſe *firſt Chriſtian Writers*, we have a large Succeſſion of *other Authors*, who Lived at *different Times*, during the ſpace of Three Hundred Years, and in *ſeveral diſtant Countries* and *Nations* throughout the *Roman Empire*, who do unanimouſly acquaint us, that Copies of thoſe *firſt Writers* were carefully preſerved in every Place; and who confirm *their* Characters, and the Truth of *their* Relation; which they aſſure us were every where believed ſo firmly and heartily, that vaſt Multitudes of People, in all Places, forſook the Religion they had been bred up in, laid aſide the old Laws and

and Cuſtoms they had lived by, reſtrained the Inclinations, and denied the Appetites they had indulged, and conquered inveterate Prejudices and Averſions, in order to comply with the *Doctrine* and *Inſtitution* of *Chriſt*, according as it was delivered in the *Scriptures of the New Teſtament*.

And in the ſame manner we are informed, that during theſe Three Hundred Years, all ſorts of *Chriſtians* were expoſed to great Troubles, Loſſes and Sufferings, upon account of their Profeſſion; and that abundance of them indured various Tortures, and ſuffered Death and Reproach, for not renouncing their Faith; of which number were moſt of the Writers of thoſe Times, of whoſe Sincerity, Piety, and Diligent Enquiry into the Truth of the *Chriſtian Hiſtory* and *Revelation*, we have ample Teſtimonies remaining: Several of them were likewiſe very Learned Men, of great Fame and Reputation for *Philoſophy*, and who would not yeild to the Simplicity of the *Goſpel* till over-ruled and bore down by the Irreſiſtible Authority of Matters of Fact well proved and atteſted. All of them writ at ſuch Times, and in ſuch Places,

when and where every body that read what they had writ, was as capable of imforming himſelf of the Truth and Integrity of the *Chriſtian Tradition* as the Authors themſelves were, there being a great many other Writers cited by them, and divers other Monuments and Records appealed to, which were then extant and publickly known.

It is moreover very remarkable, That, during this forementioned Term of 300 Years, while *Chriſtianity* was new, and under Perſecution, neither the *Jews* nor *Heathens*, thoſe induſtrious Enemies and Oppoſers of the *Goſpel*, who were every where mixt with the *Chriſtians*, and were continually Diſputing with them: This, I ſay, is a further confirmation of the Truth of the *Chriſtian Religion*, that not one of all its Ancient Enemies, either *Jew* or *Heathen*, ſhould ever deny or call in queſtion the great and wonderful Facts 'twas built upon; but that ſeveral of them ſhould corroborate the *Chriſtian* Accounts by many Circumſtances mention'd in their own Writings, as 'tis manifeſt they have done.

Thus ſtands the *firſt* and *earlieſt* Proof of *the Chriſtian Religion* from *Humane Teſtimony*;

Testimony; which is further confirmed by an innumerable and continually increasing Company of *Writers*, and the *Constancy* and *Universality of Belief* ever since, which, by reason of some Opposition or other, has been, in every Age almost examined over again, and stood the Test of the most Malicious Examination.

2. In the next place then, without considering these *Humane Authorities* in particular, let us examine what *Connexion* there is betwixt the *present State of Christianity* in the World, and the *Ancient History* of it.

That *the Christian Religion* is now own'd and professed in a great many Countries; that, where-ever *the Christian Religion* is believed, there the *Scriptures of the New Testament* are acknowledged also as the Rule and Standard of it; and that all the wonderful Facts therein Recorded, are believed by *Christians* to have really happen'd at the Times and Places there mentioned, are Matters of Fact which every Body may, by his own Observation, find to be true, and I shall here take for granted.

This therefore being the preſent State of Things in the World, it neceſſarily follows from hence, That *the Chriſtian Religion* had a Beginning: There was a Time when *the Chriſtian Religion* was no where practiſed, nor any of thoſe Facts, Recorded in *the New Teſtament*, believed. How then came it to paſs, That any Body ſhould *Contrive* and *Publiſh* ſuch a Scheme as this? And how came any Body to *believe* it when Publiſhed, if it had not been true?

'Tis plain that the *firſt Contrivers*, *Publiſhers*, and *Believers* of the *Chriſtian Religion*, whoever they were, muſt have been either Perſons of *no Religion at all* before, or of a *different* one from the *Chriſtian*; they muſt have been either *Good Men* or *Ill Men*, ſuch as lived up to the Rules and Principles of the *Chriſtian Religion*, or contrary to them: But whichſoever of theſe Characters we ſuppoſe belong'd to the *firſt Chriſtians*, I cannot poſſibly account for the *Preſent State of Chriſtianity*, if the *Principal Facts* related in the *New Teſtament* were not *true*.

I cannot conceive that an *Atheiſt*, or a *Wicked Man*, that was bred up in *different Notions* of *Religion*, and whoſe Practice was

was contrary to the *Chriſtian Rules of Life*, could *invent* ſuch a Scheme as contradicted and condemned all his former Opinions and Practices, or would have been at the pains to do it if he could. And I can as little imagine that there was any Perſon before the appearance of *Chriſtianity* in the World, who could, by the ſtrength of his own Capacities, without any *Divine Aſſiſtance*, find out ſuch a noble Plan and Model of Humane Life as that contained *in the New Teſtament*, and by the extrarodinary force and goodneſs of his own Diſpoſition, live up to it himſelf before he recommended it to others; and as impoſſible is it to ſuppoſe that ſuch a good Man as this ſhould throw off thoſe contrary Sentiments and Impreſſions of Religion he had been brought up in, for being Falſe and Ineffectual for the promoting a good Life; and at the ſame time forge a Set of the moſt unaccountable Lyes that were ever known, and make uſe of this *Impoſture* to inforce the Belief and Practice of his new Principles, which are plainly and directly inconſiſtent with ſuch Methods.

But could we ſuppoſe any Perſon capable of *framing* ſuch a Scheme as the

Christian Religion, without the help of *Revelation* for the *Doctrines* of it, or *true History* for the *Facts* 'tis built upon; What *End* or *Motive* could be imagined sufficient to determine him to do it? He could not propose any *Profit* or *Advantage* to himself from a Work which he knew would render all the Promoters of it liable to Reproaches, Troubles and Afflictions, and every thing that was hard and grievous in Life: For this, whoever Published *the Christian Religion* first, assures us was to be the Lot and Portion of those that imbraced it: This is one of the Principal Doctrines of the *Gospel*; where we are commanded to quit all we Possess; to renounce all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of the World; to expect Tribulation and Anguish, Ignominy and Death, and to suffer all manner of Persecution gladly for the sake of the *Christian Profession*. How could a Man that made this a part of his Religion, and had foresight enough to know he should have occasion to practice it himself, think of advancing his Interest in the World by such an Invention.

And how can we imagine any uncertain, doubtful Prospect of Future *Reputation*

putation after Death ſhould be ſtrong enough to bear him up againſt all the ſure and ſenſible Diſcouragements he was to meet with while he Lived?

As this cannot well be imagined, ſo neither is it probable to believe, that the meer *pleaſure of deceiving* ſhould put a Man upon the contrivance of ſuch a Scheme as was very unlikely to take, very hazardous to the Impoſtor, and very beneficial to all that were deceived.

It is moreover very unconceivable how any Man ſhould think of advancing the *preſent Intereſt and Welfare of Mankind* by perſwading them to believe all the Wonderful Facts and Extraordinary Doctrines of the *Chriſtian Religion*, which have no manner of relation to it; and how he ſhould come to be ſo mightily for their Happineſs *in a Future State*, which he had no certainty of from *Revelation:* Neither is there any reaſon to be given why he ſhould imagine the belief of thoſe Facts and Doctrines neceſſary to their Happineſs in a Future State, if he had been ſure there was one; nor why he ſhould pitch upon the groſſeſt Forgeries imaginable, in order to promote

mote the practice of such Vertues among Men as are directly opposite to the means he used for this end.

We cannot therefore account for the *contrivance* of the *Christian Religion* from any *End* or *Motive* that was likely to put a Man upon such a Work, because it is very manifest from the whole Tenour of this Religion, that the Author of it, if it had been an Imposture, could not have promised himself any kind of advantage from his Undertaking.

And upon further Enquiry and Examination, it will appear, That if any Man had been wise enough to invent such a Religion, and foolish enough to have had some certain aim and prospect in effecting it, his Success could never have been answerable to his Expectation. For how could such a *Religion* as the *Christian*, have ever obtained so general a Credit in the World, as we find it now has, if it had been purely *Humane Invention?* The *Morality* of it is so Pure and Holy, so contrary to all the prevailing Inclinations and Interests of Mankind in this Life, that we find it the hardest thing in the

the World, by continual Care and Inſtruction, to bring Men to ſubmit to it, who have been accuſtomed by Education to believe it *Revealed by God*, and Eſtabliſhed upon the Conditions of Eternal Happineſs and Miſery in another World, who are confirm'd in that belief by the concurrent Faith of all they know and converſe with, and who are left without a poſſibility of diſproving the Truth of the pretended *Revelation*, if it had been at firſt an *Impoſture*: How then can we imagine that the *Chriſtian Laws and Rules of Life* ſhould have been ſo eaſily received at their firſt Publication, ſo widely Propagated afterwards, and ſo abſolutely and intirely ſubmitted to, that they ſhould become the ſtanding unalterable Laws of ſo many different Countries and Nations as do now profeſs *the Chriſtian Faith*; How, I ſay, could this have ever happen'd, if the firſt Set of Perſons that imbraced this *Morality* had not been fully convinced that it had been expreſly *revealed by God*, and injoyned Mankind under the Sanction of *Eternal Rewards and Puniſhments?* And how could any Man be perſwaded of this without believing thoſe *wonderful Facts*, upon the Credit of which the Truth

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of the whole *Revelation* is Founded? But if we ſuppoſe the *firſt Chriſtians* that ever were, believed all thoſe Matters of Fact, how can this be ſuppoſed of them except they were true? How can we poſſibly imagine that the *Principal Matters of Fact* related *in the New Teſtament*, which are now a neceſſary part of the Faith of all *Chriſtians* ſhould be believed by thoſe in whoſe times the Scheme is laid, in contradiction to all their Senſes, or firſt obtain Credit among thoſe who lived afterwards, without any proof of their being done or believed before? And if we ſuppoſe *the Chriſtian Morality* Entertained and Eſtabliſhed in the World, without the preſent *Hiſtory* we have of it, the Forgery of that afterwards would have been wholly unneceſſary, and the difficulty of getting ſuch a Forgery believed, much greater.

From hence then it plainly follows that there could never have been *ſuch a ſtate of things in the World* as we *now* perceive, if all the Principal Parts and Subſtance of the *Chriſtian Hiſtory*, as it is at preſent generally believed, were not true, and had ſome time or other really happen'd out according to the Relation we find given of them. This

This does likewiſe further appear from the *way* and *manner* in which thoſe *Books* that contain this Hiſtory are Written; where we find ſo many extraordinary Marks and Characters of the Simplicity, Integrity, and undeſigning Humility of the Writers, their hearty Belief of what they wrote themſelves, and their great Zeal and Concern for the Good of Mankind, as plainly ſhew them to have been Influenced not only by the force of well-atteſted Truth, but by ſome *extraordinary* and *more than Humane Impreſſions.*

3. Theſe are in ſhort the Reaſons we have to believe the *Truth of the Chriſtian Religion*: The Validity and Force of which I ſhall endeavour to make out more fully under the Third Head; where I am to ſhew the *Sufficiency of the Proof* that has been given of the *Chriſtian Matters of Fact* from the *Nature of Things*, upon which the certainty of all Matters of Fact, as well as other Truths, is ultimately founded.

Now the chief and immediate Reaſon of believing moſt Facts, being taken from the *Nature of Man*, and there being nothing we are ſo well acquainted with

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as the common *Original*, *Capacities* and *Powers*, *Inclinations* and *Averſions* of *Mankind*, and conſequently their *Ends* and *Motives of acting*, it will be eaſie to ſhew from hence, that the *proof of the Chriſtian Religion before given*, is not only *ſufficient* to determine our aſſent to it, but does in Evidence, and Multiplicity of Conviction, far exceed the Proof any other Matters of Fact are capable of.

In the firſt place then, let us conſider why we believe any Matter of Fact, which never fell within our *own particular* and *immediate Cognizance?* Why do we ſo firmly believe the *Story* of *Julius Ceſar*, and *William the Conqueror*, that *there is ſuch a place as Italy* or *China*, &c? Now the reaſon of this, upon examining our ſelves, we ſhall find to be, becauſe a *great many Men* have acquainted us that there were formerly ſuch Perſons who did ſuch and ſuch Things; and that there are now ſuch Places in the World, *&c.* which Men were *competent Judges* of what they tell us, had *ſufficient Opportunities of knowing* the Truth themſelves, *no Motives conceivable* that could diſpoſe them to lye to others, and are *contradicted by no body of equal Authority* with them; theſe are all *the grounds of Credi-*

Credibility, upon which *Matters of Fact* are generally believed; and no further Characters of Truth are required by one that is ſatisfied of theſe. But we have all theſe Reaſons to believe the *Common Matters of Fact* related in the *New Teſtament*, in the fulleſt Force and Extent of them, and ſeveral other beſides, as the *Incapacity of the Witneſſes to deceive*, if they had been diſpoſed to do it, the *greater Motives* they had *not to ſay* what they did, than *to ſay* it if it had been falſe, and the *greater Motives other Perſons* had *to contradict* them if they could have been diſproved. Let us examine all theſe *Characters of Truth*, and ſee how far the Proof of the *Chriſtian Hiſtory* exceeds that of other *Matters of Fact*; and how far the ſuppoſed Falſhood of it, notwithſtanding theſe Characters, is conſiſtent with that certain Knowledge we have of *Humane Nature*.

As to the firſt Character required for the Proof of Matters of Fact, *the Number of the Witneſſes*; there never was certainly ſo vaſt a Multitude of Perſons, all unanimouſly agreeing to aſſert the Truth of ſo great a variety of Matters of Fact, as there is in the Caſe before us; becauſe the Progreſs of *Chriſtianity* was ſo ſwift,

that

that we cannot ſuppoſe more Perſons could have been acquainted with the *Hiſtory* and *Doctrines* of it in ſo ſhort a time; and there never was ſuch induſtrious Care taken to propagate the Belief of any other Facts and Opinions that we ever read of.

It is likewiſe as certain, that the whole Multitude of the *firſt Publiſhers*, and *Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity* were as *competent Judges* of the Matters they bear witneſs of, as 'tis poſſible for any Man to be of any thing elſe whatſoever. We will only ſuppoſe now, that *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples*, *pretended* to ſuch Things as are Recorded of them in the *Scriptures*, and conſequently to believe their own Pretences; and that all others who profeſs'd the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, did declare their Belief of all thoſe Things which are related as ſaid or done by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*: And ſurely a Man may infallibly know his own Thoughts and Imaginations; he can tell whether he believes ſuch or ſuch a Thing or no, or at leaſt he can be certain that he thinks or fancies he believes it; and, if there be any Intercourſe or Communication betwixt Men, one Man may know that another pretends to believe or

do

do a Thing, whether he really believes or does it or no. If a Multitude of Men can be deceived in ſuch Judgments as theſe concerning themſelves and one another, 'tis evident that there is no ſuch thing as Knowledge at all.

If therefore it muſt be allowed, that a vaſt Multitude of Perſons did *pretend* to believe all thoſe things that they are ſaid to believe *in the New Teſtament*, it neceſſarily follows from hence, that they did really and truly believe them, or elſe they pretended to believe what they certainly knew to be falſe. But that they did not pretend to believe what they knew to be falſe will evidently appear from theſe further Reflections upon *Humane Nature*.

Firſt, then 'tis certain that every Man muſt act for ſome *End* or *Motive*, and here is no End or Motive conceivable that could determine any of the *firſt Publiſhers* or *Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity*, to pretend to believe thoſe Facts which they knew to be falſe. All the *Ends* and *Motives* we can imagine any Man to act upon in ſuch a Caſe, we have reckoned up before; and we find, that if we put our ſelves into the ſame Circumſtances with thoſe *firſt Witneſſes of Chriſtianity*, it would

have been impoſſible for us to have been influenced by any of them to make the ſame pretences, being infallibly aſſured at the ſame time, that they were utterly falſe and groundleſs; from whence we conclude, that neither did they, ſince all Men are ſo made and contrived, as to be determined by the ſame *general Motives*, though, according to the *difference of the Objects* that affect them, and the *difference of the Imaginations* of thoſe that are affected, the Influence may be ſtronger upon ſome than others.

If we conſider the *Power* and *Force of Truth* in general, the natural *Eaſe* and *Pleaſure* that accompanies *Sincerity*, and the *Difficulty* and *Reluctance* with which Men practiſe known *Deceit* and *Falſhood*; we cannot but infer from hence, that it very rarely happens, that any Men come to find a pleaſure in Lying, *purely for deceiving ſake*, without any *further End* or *Proſpect*; and all Obſervations upon the Hiſtory of Mankind confirm this Concluſion; and therefore we judge it *contrary* to *the Nature of Man* to ſuppoſe there was a whole Age of ſuch *Deceivers* as theſe, who pretended to believe a great number of *unprofitable Lyes*, which were

to

to bring them in no other Pleaſure or Satisfaction than what every one found in deceiving others. But 'tis plain, that if *Chriſtianity* was an *Impoſture*, this muſt be ſuppoſed: For none of the *firſt Chriſtians* ever pretended to any other Pleaſures or Advantages of Life: They made it part of their Religion to renounce them all; and the World was not ſo kind as to force them to accept what they had voluntarily abandoned.

And if it be *contrary* to *Humane Nature* in *General*, to imagine that a *vaſt Multitude of People* of *different Tempers* and *Inclinations*, ſhould all conſpire together to pretend a Belief of what they knew to be falſe, without any further proſpect of Pleaſure and Advantage, than what immediately reſulted from ſuch Pretences; much more repugnant is it when we conſider *the Characters* of theſe Pretenders; the greateſt part of which were Perſons of ſuch *ſteady* integrity before, that Lying muſt have offered the greateſt violence imaginable to their Conſciences.

But further, ſuppoſing *the firſt Chriſtians* had *ſome Motives* ſufficient to determine them all to agree in the ſame falſe

Pretences, notwithſtanding that great *contrariety* of *Intereſts* ſuch a Multitude is commonly govern'd by; whatever Advantages they propoſed to themſelves, they found ſuch mighty diſappointments every where in their Hopes, and indured ſuch unſpeakable Troubles and Afflictions for the ſake of their Profeſſion, that they had *ſtronger Motives* for their diſcovering and relinquiſhing the Cheat they had maintained, than they could have at firſt to begin it; and therefore, if none of them were induced to confeſs their Pretences falſe, in ſuch occaſions where other Men have been often tempted, or forced to diſown the Truth, we muſt infer from hence, that they did really believe all they pretended to, or they were not like other Men, but of a *ſtrange Nature*, *different* from whatever we have known or heard of.

This muſt be likewiſe ſaid too of all the other People of that Age when *Chriſtianity* was firſt Publiſhed, who *refuſed to believe* the *Chriſtian Pretences*: For how otherwiſe can we account for their not contradicting and diſproving them when they had all thoſe *Motives* and *Reaſons* for *diſcovering the Impoſture*, which were manifeſtly

manifeſtly wanting for the *Invention* and *Propagation* of it.

From all which, I think we may with confidence conclude, that the *firſt Authors*, *Publiſhers*, and *Profeſſors of Chriſtianity*, did *really believe* all they declared and aſſerted: From whence it immediately and neceſſarily follows, that all the *Common Matters of Fact* which they believed to be true, were actually *true*, they having the ſame *Evidence of Senſe* for them, as we have now, or any other Generation of Men ever had, for whatever fell under the Cognizance of their Senſes; ſo that if they were deceived, we muſt call in queſtion all our own *Senſations*, which are the Foundations of all our other Knowledge. And the ſame Evidence that they had for theſe *Common Matters of Fact*, they had alſo for all the *Extraordinary Facts* mention'd in the *Chriſtian Hiſtory*, ſo far as concerns the Things done, and the *Pretences of the Authors*; and as to the *Power* by which they were done, I am as ſure they exceed all *Humane Strength* and *Skill*, as I am ſure any thing elſe does. And then, according to the beſt and trueſt Notions we are able to frame of the *Divine Nature*, we cannot but judge they

were very proper Marks and Indications of *his Power*, manifeſt Tokens of his *Goodneſs* to Men, and ſo ſuited and adapted to their Capacities, that we cannot frame or imagine a way whereby *God* could have more effectually revealed himſelf to us, if he ever deſigned to reveal himſelf to us at all; and it appears very agreeable both to his *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, that he ſhould make ſuch a *Revelation* as *the Chriſtian Religion* is to us, as has been ſhown more at large before.

If therefore there was an Age when the ſeveral Perſons mention'd in *the New Teſtament* did *pretend* to do what is there Recorded of them, and all the *principal Matters of Fact* which make up the *Chriſtian Hiſtory* were believed far and wide, according to the Relation there given, 'tis inconſiſtent with all the Principles of *Humane Nature*, and repugnant to the *Nature of God*, that they ſhould be falſe, as far as we are able, by all the Knowledge we have of the *Nature* of *God* and *Man* to judge.

That there was ſuch an Age as this, we have the *conſtant*, *univerſal*, and *uninterrupted Teſtimony* of all the ſucceeding Ages; and

and when a great many different Countries and Nations do all Unanimouſly agree to aſſert, that their Immediate Forefathers did receive ſuch a *Religion*, conſiſting of a great variety of *Facts* and *Doctrines*; and all theſe being contained in certain Books, and Copies of thoſe Books being diſperſed throughout theſe ſeveral Countries, the *Faith* is every where the ſame: In ſuch a caſe as this, it is not to be doubted, but ſo far as the ſucceeding Generation of Men agree in their Teſtimony concerning the Faith of their immediate Predeceſſors, ſo far they were of the ſame Faith with them. If this be not allowed, 'tis impoſſible to know any thing beyond our own Time, and no *Humane Teſtimony* is to be admitted upon any occaſion, a greater and more unſuſpected Teſtimony then this being utterly inconceivable: But, if ſuch Evidence as this be certain and unqueſtionable, as indeed it is, then is the *preſent univerſal belief of the Scriptures of the New Teſtament* an undeniable Argument that there was a time when the *Principal Matters of Fact* there Recorded were *pretended* to be done, and were *believed* by vaſt Multitudes of thoſe who lived at that

time, to be really done in the way and manner in which they are now related to have happen'd; and if they were then believed, they muſt be true for the Reaſons before given.

Thus far the Sufficiency of the *poſitive* and *direct* part of the proof of the *Chriſtian Religion* is manifeſted from the *Nature of Things*: And in the ſame manner it will appear, that what has been before offered to ſhew the *abſurdity* of ſuppoſing the *Chriſtian Religion* an *Impoſture*, is ſufficient to determine any Man to believe it.

For if we throughly and impartially conſider the *whole Chriſtian Scheme*, as delivered in the *Writings of the New Teſtament*, which we have before laid together in a ſhort Draught and Repreſentation of the Principal Parts and Characters of it; and if at the ſame time we take a juſt view of *Humane Nature*, we ſhall find it utterly impoſſible that ſuch a Scheme as this ſhould ever have been *contrived* or *believed* without any *Extraordinary Interpoſition* of *Divine Providence*.

All the Notions we have of the *Powers* and *Capacities* of the *Soul of Man*, will not

not enable us to conceive how ſuch a Set of Thoughts as compoſe the *Chriſtian Scheme*, could be brought together by the meer *unaſſiſted Force* and *Agitation of the Soul*, whatever Internal Springs we imagine that Force derived from.

But when we conſider further, that if there had been any Man capable of ſuch an *Invention*, there was no *End* or *Motive* ſufficient to determine him to undertake it, and Conduct and Support him in the Management of the whole Work, we muſt conclude that it was not of Humane *Compoſition*. And this we are aſſured of, becauſe there are but ſuch and ſuch Ends that Mankind can act upon, and none of theſe could have any influence in the *Contrivance* of the *Chriſtian Religion* in the manner we find it delivered to us in the *New Teſtament*; for it is ſo Framed and Contrived in all its Parts and Circumſtances, that 'twas impoſſible for any one that could be the Author of it, not to perceive that all the Ways and Methods he took of Eſtabliſhing his Invention would moſt certainly and effectually defeat the End he aimed at, whatever we ſuppoſe that to be; and no Man could make uſe of ſuch *means* for the obtaining

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an *End* which he knew would deſtroy it.

But beſides the difficulties of the *Invention*, which cannot be accounted for by all the knowledge we have of the *Nature of Man*, the *Propagation* of the *Chriſtian Religion* does plainly ſurmount all *Humane Art* and *Power*. For ſuppoſing the *firſt Chriſtians* never ſo well inclined to believe *Chriſtianity* when it was propoſed to them, 'tis impoſſible for Men to believe what they will. The Evidence of ſome things is ſo great, that we cannot reſiſt; and, on the contrary, there are ſome things of ſuch a Nature, that no *Byaſs* or *Prejudice* whatſoever is ſtrong enough to make us believe them without their proper Evidence; and ſuch are all the *Principal parts* of the *Chriſtian Hiſtory*, as appears from the Reflections before made upon them. But if we conſider the *firſt Chriſtians*, as being all ſtrongly diſpoſed to reject the *Chriſtian Religion* before they embraced it, as 'tis certain they were, whoever we ſuppoſe them to be, then was their difficulty of believing much greater: From whence it is neceſſarily inferr'd that if the *Principal Matters of Fact* contained in the *Chriſtian Hiſtory* had

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not been proved to be *true*, when they were firſt Publiſhed, they could never have been *believed*; and if they could not have been truly and really believed, 'twas full as impoſſible that great Multitudes of People ſhould *pretend to believe* them when they did not; becauſe all the *Reaſons* and *Motives* that can be ſuppoſed for ſuch Pretences, could have no more Influence in the *firſt Profeſſion* then they had in the *Invention* of *Chriſtianity*, and there they had none at all, as we have ſhewn before.

Thus does it plainly appear from the whole *Frame* and *Texture* of the *Chriſtian Religion*, the *Nature* of the *Facts* and *Doctrines* contained in it, and the *manner* in which it is delivered to the World, compared with the *Nature of Man*, that the *Chriſtian Religion*, as we now find it contained in the *Scriptures* of the *New Teſtament*, was *Diſcovered*, *Publiſhed*, and *Propagated* in the way and manner there Recorded: From whence I ſhall infer, that it certainly *came from God*, for the Reaſons given in the former part of this Diſcourſe, concerning the *Nature of God*, and *Evil Spirits*, which I ſhall not repeat here; becauſe if the firſt Point be granted,

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this Inference, I believe, will not be diſputed by any Man.

Now that the Arguments here taken from the *Nature of Man* have all the force and weight that is laid upon them, I ſhall further endeavour to make good, by ſhewing that we have as much reaſon to conclude that theſe are Juſt and True, as we have that any other Arguments drawn from the *Nature of Things* are Valid: In order to which end I ſhall take the liberty to go over the chief Proofs of the *Chriſtian Religion* again, and conſider them with this particular View.

Let us then examine what ground we proceed upon in our reaſoning upon other Matters, and how we arrive at any certainty concerning them. How come we to affirm that a *Body* of ſuch a *Denſity* and *Bulk* is of ſuch a *Weight*; that a Body of ſuch a *Weight*, has ſuch a *force in Projection*; that ſuch a particular Body, in ſuch and ſuch Circumſtances, will certainly produce ſuch *Effects*; that 'tis impoſſible that ſuch a Body ſhould exceed ſuch limits in its *Motion*, and the like? Now the only reaſon we have to conclude ſuch Propoſi-

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tions concerning *Bodies* to be true, upon which all the fine *Mathematical Demonſtrations* in *Natural Philoſophy*, and all the *uſeful Inventions* in *Mechanicks* are grounded, is this, That all the *Obſervations* and *Experiments* that have ever been made upon theſe things do aſſure us, that they have always been after this manner; and the like will hold in our Reaſonings from *Humane Nature*.

I can no more believe the *whole Chriſtian Scheme* an *Impoſture* of mere *Humane Contrivance*, than I can believe that all the Materials which compoſed the City of *Rome* met together, and put themſelves into that Form: For as I cannot ſee what ſhould give thoſe Materials a determinate Motion towards the building that City, no more can I comprehend what ſhould influence or determine a Man to Frame and Contrive ſuch a *Hiſtory* and *Religion* as the *Chriſtian*. And, as 'tis impoſſible to believe that, if all the Materials neceſſary for the Building of *Rome* had, by ſome extraordinary Motion, been carried to that Place, they would have faſhioned themſelves and fell into that exact Form we find that City built in; ſo likewiſe is it equally impoſſible to conceive, that if there was any *End* or *Motive*

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in Nature ſufficient to determine a Man to *invent* ſuch a *Religion* as the *Chriſtian*, he ſhould have made and contrived it, in all its Parts and Circumſtances, juſt ſuch as it is delivered to us in the *Scriptures*, and that ſo contrived it ſhould have been *Entertained*, *Propagated*, and *Fixt* in the World upon laſting Foundations.

Now the reaſon why I conclude both theſe things equally impoſſible is, becauſe there never was any thing like either of theſe Events ever known to have happen'd in the World, and becauſe upon the utmoſt ſtretch of Thought, grounded upon the moſt intimate Knowledge we can have of the *Nature* of the *Things* concern'd, and the greateſt compaſs of *Obſervation* that can be made upon the courſe of things in the World, it cannot be conceived or imagined that ſuch Events as theſe ſhould ever happen.

That there never was an *Inſtance* of any thing like the *Chriſtian Scheme*, which was proved or allowed by any body in the World to be an *Impoſture*, I ſhall take for granted, ſince none of the *Enemies of Chriſtianity* have ever produced one.

As for *Mahometiſm*, which ſome have had the impudence to compare with *Chriſtianity*;

Chriſtianity; ſo far as both they and we allow it to be an *Impoſture*, it can have no manner of place here as a *Parallel Inſtance*. For it is on all hands granted that there was ſuch a Man as *Mahomet*, who lived at the Time and Place 'tis pretended by his Followers he did; 'tis granted likewiſe that he wrote the *Alcoran*, and pretended to the things there Recorded of him; and that his Religion prevailed, and was Propagated in the way and manner there related and deſcribed by him: But, in the preſent ſuppoſition of the *whole Chriſtian Scheme's* being an *Impoſture*, it muſt be affirmed that *all the Scriptures* of *the New Teſtament*, and the *whole Hiſtory* therein contained, are meer *Forgery* and *Invention*, without any Foundation of *Truth* in the *Common Matters of Fact* there Recorded, which makes the caſe of *Chriſtianity*, in all the important variety of Circumſtances and Events poſſible, unlike that of *Mahometiſm*.

And as no *Inſtance* of ſuch an Impoſture, as is here pretended, can be given out of the *Hiſtory of former times*, ſo likewiſe is it utterly impoſſible to imagine that ſuch an Inſtance as this could ever happen at all.

To

To give our ſelves a fuller and more ſenſible Conviction of this, let us take as exact and extenſive a view as we can of the *State of the World*, juſt before we affirm that *Chriſtianity* was diſcovered, or at the lateſt Period of Time mentioned in the *New Teſtament*; Let us conſider the General Temper, Inclinations, Opinions, and Intereſts of the *Jews* at that time, together with the higheſt Improvements in Learning and Religion then amongſt them; Let us make the ſame Reflections upon the *Roman State* and *Government*, and the Principal *Nations* and *Countries* within that Empire: Then let us carefully weigh and examine the *Chriſtian Hiſtory* and *Religion* contained in the *Scriptures* of the *New Teſtament*; let us repreſent to our ſelves, in one continued Proſpect, all the Principal *Facts* there Recorded, drawn forth in all their variety of Circumſtances, the whole Syſtem of *Doctrines* and *Rules*, in their juſt Dependance and Connexion, the *Characters of the Perſons* concerned in the Publiſhing and Eſtabliſhing them, together with the *way* and *manner* in which all theſe things are Written; and when we have done this, let us truly and impartially ask our ſelves

ſelves whether we can poſſibly conceive how any Perſon could at that time *Invent* and *Publiſh* that whole Scheme of Things at *Jeruſalem*, *Rome*, or any other part of the *Roman Empire*, without any ground of truth to build upon; and, ſuppoſing it Publiſhed, how it could be *Believed* ſo firmly, and *Propagated* ſo far and wide, that it ſhould be *fixt* and *continue* in all this part of the World to this day, without any Footſteps or Motives remaining whereby we might be able to detect the *Impoſture*. This, I ſay, appears to me as hard to conceive, as that *Rome* ſhould build it ſelf; and I am verily perſwaded would appear ſo to any one elſe, that had as fully and impartially conſidered the Matter as I have endeavoured to do.

If we date the *Impoſture* later, the ſame difficulty will attend the *Invention* and *Propagation* of it, and we ſhall be further puzled to account for all the *Signs* and *Monuments* of *Chriſtianity*, which will appear to have been before the Period aſſigned for its *Original*, whereſoever we place it.

But if we deal as fairly by *Chriſtianity* as we do by *Mahometiſm*, and allow the *Common Matters of Fact* Recorded of it

to be true; if we grant that there was ſuch a Man as *Chriſt*, who lived at the Time and Place 'tis affirmed by *Chriſtians* he did; that he and his *Diſciples* pretended to what is Recorded in the *Scriptures* of the *New Teſtament* of them; that thoſe Books were written by the Perſons whoſe Names they bear; and that the *Chriſtian Religion* ſpread and prevail'd over the World in the way and manner, and by the means of thoſe Pretences we have there an account of: Granting, I ſay, all theſe things, as by the general acknowledgement of all ſorts of Perſons, and the impoſſibility of their being falſe juſt before proved, they muſt be granted: From hence it neceſſarily follows that all the other *Extraordinary Facts* are *true*, and conſequently that the *Chriſtian Religion came from God*, and lays a neceſſary Obligation upon Mankind to believe it, and conform themſelves to it.

This is certain in the ſame way of Reaſoning we uſed before, becauſe there never was an *Inſtance*, and it cannot be conceived there ever ſhould be one, where ſuch *Marks* and *Indications of Truth*, as accompany theſe things, ſhould all belong to an *Impoſture*.

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Upon this account therefore it is that we affirm all theſe things to be impoſſible; *viz.*

That Perſons of ſuch *Characters*, as *Chriſt* and his *Diſciples* were repreſented to be, ſhould *invent* and *contrive* the *Chriſtian Doctrine* and *Inſtitution*, or *perform* thoſe things that are Recorded of them, meerly by their own *Skill* and *Power*.

That *Chriſt* and his *Diſciples* ſhould *pretend* to have done ſuch *Extraordinary Facts* as are attributed to them in the *New Teſtament*, if they were not the true and immediate Inſtruments by whom they were done.

That ſuch Multitudes of Perſons as we there Read of, ſhould *believe* theſe Facts, and imbrace *Chriſtianity* upon the Credit of them if they were not true, or ſhould *pretend to believe* them if they were not really perſwaded of their truth.

And if all the *Principal Facts*, both *Common* and *Extraordinary*, were certainly true, as far as the Perſons concerned in bearing Teſtimony to them were capable of perceiving their Truth; It is likewiſe impoſſible but the *whole Chriſtian Religion*, and all the Conduct and Ma-

nagement in the *Diſcovery* and *Propagation* of it muſt *come from God.*

All theſe Propoſitions we are firmly aſſured of upon this ground, *viz.* becauſe, if we ſuppoſe the contrary of any thing here alledged, no *Parallel Inſtance* can be given to prove the truth of what we ſuppoſe; and if we repreſent any of theſe Caſes to our ſelves fairly in all its Circumſtances, we cannot poſſibly conceive it ſhould ever happen.

'Tis true indeed there have been Perſons of low Fortunes and mean Imployments in the World, who have, by the meer force of their *Natural Genius*, ſpoke Wiſely, and acted Gallantly, upon ſome Occaſions; but 'twas never known, and 'tis impoſſible to conceive, that Perſons of no Learning or Education, who knew nothing beyond the mean Affairs of their own Village, and never Converſt with any of higher Improvements than themſelves; it is impoſſible, I ſay, to imagine that ſuch Perſons as theſe ſhould be able, by the *meer ſtrength* of their *Natural Parts*, to Compoſe ſuch *Poems* as *Virgil's*, and ſuch *Orations* as *Tully's*, and ſhould likewiſe at the ſame time exceed all others in the Skill of *Explaining hard Authors*,

hors, and in the Knowledge of *Phyſick*: But 'tis much harder to conceive, that *Chriſt* and his *Diſciples*, being Perſons of ſuch Education and Character, as they are repreſented to us to be, could, by their *own unaſſiſted Capacities*, *Compoſe the Chriſtian Religion*, *Interpret Ancient Prophecies*, *Foretel Future Events*, *Cure all manner of Sick* and *Maimed*, and *perform* all thoſe *other Mighty Works* that are Recorded of them.

We have heard of ſeveral Perſons who have pretended to *Revelations*, to *Prophecies*, to *Miracles*, and to all of them falſly, without any ground for their pretences; but there never were any who pretended to *ſuch Revelations*, *ſuch Prophecies*, and *ſuch Miracles*, as we find in the *Scriptures of the New Teſtament*, ſo many, and ſo publick, ſo far exceeding all the conceivable Power of Art and Confederacy, ſo liable to diſcovery and contradiction, if they were falſe; ſo hazardous to the Undertakers, and ſo beneficial to the World, in ſuch a continued Series, all of them concurrent to the ſame End, and accompanied with ſuch other Circumſtances as theſe are related to be. Whoever will be at the pains to conſider all this

this wonderful Scheme of Things together, will find it impoſſible to *contrive* ſuch another, though he has the Advantage of a Model before him, which the Author of this had not; and, ſuppoſing he had ſucceeded in ſuch a Contrivance, he would find it impoſſible to prevail upon himſelf to *pretend* to *act it over*; there being no Motives conceivable which bear any manner of Proportion to the plain and certain diſcouragements he muſt foreſee, ſuppoſing he knew all his Pretences to be falſe, as in the preſent Caſe muſt be ſuppoſed: And the ſame will hold with reſpect to the *firſt Profeſſors of Chriſtianity*: 'Twould be equally impoſſible for them to *pretend to believe* all theſe Things, if they were not really and fully perſuaded of the Truth of them.

Lying and Deceiving are a pleaſure to ſome Men, and the more notorious and groſs the Deceit is, the greater is the Satisfaction: But then 'tis certain likewiſe, that there are very few of ſuch a temper, as to be pleaſed with *Lying* and *Forgery*, without any other deſign or proſpect; but that there ſhould be a large Succeſſion, and continual increaſe of ſuch Men in divers Countries and Nations,

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is much more difficult to conceive, than that there ſhould be an Age of *Crookedneſs*, and *Deformity*, when, in a conſiderable part of the World, the generality of People of all ſorts, had, of a ſudden, by ſome ſtrange unknown Influence, ſome parts of their Bodies diſtorted; and the Calamity was continually propagated all the time by an unuſual ſort of Infection.

But if this were allowed; if *all the firſt Chriſtians* were granted to be *pure Deceivers*; 'twould be exceedingly more difficult to imagine, that *the pleaſure of Deceiving* was ſo ſtrong, as to be able to ſupport ſuch vaſt Multitudes of Perſons under all the other Loſſes and Sufferings *Humane Nature* is capable of. 'Tis poſſible indeed, for Men to ſuffer all manner of Affliction, and even to die Martyrs for the falſeſt and moſt abſurd Religion that can be deviſed; and frequent Inſtances may be given of ſuch as have done ſo; but then 'tis certain alſo, that they truly and firmly believed what they Suffered for. There never was, nor ever can be ſuch an extravagant Army of *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors*, as did, or will renounce all the Comforts and Satisfactions of Life, in-

dure Grief and Pain chearfully, and be ready, upon all occaſions, to lay down their Lives for the Profeſſion of ſuch Matters of Fact, as they are all infallibly convinced are falſe, and which, they are ſure all their Perſecutors have the ſame Reaſon to know are falſe that they have: To affirm or imagine that any Men can act upon ſuch diſproportionate Motives as ſuch Men muſt be ſuppoſed to act upon, is full as abſurd and ridiculous, as to ſuppoſe that the Sea may be reſtrained with Bars, and that the Hills and Mountains are lighter than the Duſt of the Balance.

But if it be granted, as we have ſhewn it muſt, that all thoſe who *pretended* to *ſay* and *do* ſuch ſtrange Things as are related of them in the *New Teſtament*, and thoſe who *pretended* to *be perſuaded* of the Truth of what was ſaid and done, did all *really* and *truly believe* what they pretended to; then is it impoſſible to conceive, that the Things thus *believed to be true*, ſhould notwithſtanding be *falſe*. There are, it is confeſſed, no Opinions ſo extravagant and abſurd, but a great many Perſons may be throughly perſuaded of the Truth of them;

them; but there never was an Inſtance of ſuch *Stupidity* or *Enthuſiaſm* yet, where ſuch Facts as thoſe related in the *New Teſtament*, were by great Multitudes believed to have happen'd within their own immediate Cognizance, when no ſuch Things did really and truly happen at all: And 'tis impoſſible to conceive there ever ſhould be ſuch an Inſtance as this in the World, without a through change of *Humane Nature*, and all the *Powers* and *Faculties* of it: And we have no more reaſon to think it was ſo in the Caſe before us, than we have to believe that there was a Time when the *Earth* and all the *Bodies* belonging to it, did exiſt in the ſame State of outward appearance we now perceive them without *Motion*, *Figure*, or *Extenſion*.

And, if all the *Principal Matters of Fact*, both *Common* and *Extraordinary*, were *really true*, or did really and certainly happen, ſo far as *Humane Perceptions* are to be relied on; it cannot be doubted but *God* was the *Author* of *the whole Chriſtian Scheme*, becauſe we have no *Example* of any ſuch Scheme as this, that was ever made by any other Power but the *Divine*. We cannot, by the utmoſt

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Knowledge we have of all the Powers that be, conceive that any Power leſs than the *Divine*, could produce ſuch an Effect; or that any other, beſides ſuch as were Commiſſion'd by him would have produced it if they could. By what we know of the *Nature of God*, the Work appears very worthy of him, and very agreeable to all his *Attributes*; and we cannot poſſibly imagine what more proper and effectual ways God could have taken to manifeſt himſelf to us, if he was pleaſed to vouchſafe us that Favour.

Theſe are the Reaſons upon which we conclude that *the Chriſtian Religion came from God*, ſuppoſing all the *Facts* beforementioned to be true, as I think they have been proved to be; which Proof being allowed, we have as much Reaſon to believe that the *Chriſtian Religion proceeded from God*, as that the *World was Created by him*.

Thus does it plainly appear from the *Nature of Things*, that the Proofs before given of the *Chriſtian Religion*, ſeverally examined, were all very well founded. And now, if we take a juſt view of them, and conſider them all together, we

ſhall

ſhall be obliged to make the following Concluſions.

1. That there never was any Thing diſcovered, or ſo much as ſuſpected to be an *Impoſture*, that had ſo many *Marks* and *Characters of Truth* upon it, as the *Chriſtian Religion* has.

2. That there never were any *true Matters of Fact* ſo well atteſted, or that were capable of ſuch a Proof, as the *Chriſtian Facts* are: There being no Ancient Facts which have ſo many ſenſible *Monuments* and *Effects* of them left, and in the Proof of which, Mankind was ſo nearly and neceſſarily concern'd.

3. That it is impoſſible to *conceive*, or frame any Notion how, or in what manner the *Chriſtian Religion* might poſſibly have been an *Impoſture*, notwithſtanding all the preſent *appearances* of its being *true*.

And, if all theſe Concluſions are right, as I am throughly and irreſiſtibly convinced they are; and, I think, have proved them ſo to be; there can be no room left to disbelieve the *Chriſtian Religion*, without diſtruſting *all our Knowledge*, and renouncing *all pretences* to *Reaſoning*.

But

But, ſuppoſing theſe Concluſions were not any of them fully proved, and it could be ſhewn, That ſomething elſe, which had once all the *appearance of Truth* that *the Chriſtian Religion* now has, had afterwards been detected to be falſe; that ſome other Ancient Matters of Fact are as well atteſted and proved to be true, as the *Chriſtian* ſeem to be; and that 'tis poſſible to imagine, which way *the Chriſtian Religion* might come to obtain its preſent Credit in the World, notwithſtanding it was at firſt an *Impoſture*, none of which I am ſure can be proved: Yet, even in this Caſe, the Proof that has now been given of *the Chriſtian Religion*, is *ſufficient* to build our Faith upon; becauſe the moſt that can be inferr'd from all theſe Arguments, is only this, That there is a *bare poſſibility* in the *Nature of Things*, that the *Chriſtian Religion* may be falſe: But he that from hence ſhould conclude, that it was really ſo, without any other Reaſons to ſupport his Opinion, and in oppoſition to all that multiplicity of Proof that has been offered for the Truth of it, muſt not pretend *Reaſon*, but only *Reſolution* for his *Infidelity*.

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Such therefore is the *Sufficiency* of the Proof before given, whatever be the *Nature* or *Kind* of it; or however it may be thought to differ from, or fall ſhort of the *Demonſtration* uſed in other Matters, that we are utterly *inexcuſable*, if we do not believe the *Chriſtian Religion* upon it, and *God* may juſtly *Condemn* us for our disbelief, and that upon theſe two accounts:

1. Becauſe we believe *other Matters of Fact* upon *leſs Evidence*; and,

2. Becauſe we are obliged to believe *ſuch Facts* as have theſe *appearances of Truth*, which the *Chriſtian Religion* has, though they ſhould *really* be *falſe*.

1. That we believe Matters of Fact upon *leſs Evidence* than the *Chriſtian Religion* is received upon, is manifeſt, by what has been before proved, that no Matters of Fact have or are capable of ſo great; and therefore, to confirm this Point, I ſhall only bring that one Inſtance of *Mahometiſm*.

Now 'tis certain that thoſe who look upon the *Chriſtian Religion* as an *Impoſture* do

do at the ſame time profeſs to believe all the principal Parts of the *Hiſtory of Mahomet:* Such as his Pretences to *Revelation*, his Writing the *Alcoran*, and his Propagating the Belief of the things contained in it, in the way and manner therein mentioned: Theſe, I ſay, they do not in the leaſt queſtion, notwithſtanding that the *Mahometan Religion* pretends to a *Divine Original* as well as the *Chriſtian*, and is in like manner addreſt to Mankind under the Promiſes and Threatnings of *Future Happineſs* and *Miſery*; though it is withal a very abſurd Compoſition in it ſelf, and of very pernicious Conſequence to the World to be Believed and Eſtabliſhed. It is therefore very unreaſonable for Men that believe theſe things, to deny the *Common Hiſtory of Chriſtianity*; ſuch as the Pretences of *Chriſt* and his *Diſciples* to *Revelations*, *Prophecies*, and *Miracles*, the Writing of the *Scriptures* of the *New Teſtament* by thoſe whoſe Names they bear, or at leaſt by ſome of *Chriſt's* immediate Diſciples; and the Propagation of the *Chriſtian Religion* according to the Times, Places, Ways and Methods Recorded in thoſe Books: 'Tis very unreaſonable

reaſonable, I ſay, for Men who believe the *Hiſtory of Mahometiſm*, to queſtion the truth of theſe things; becauſe they are atteſted by a much greater variety of Books and other Monuments, and a greater multiplicity of the Copies of the *Scriptures*; all which Teſtimonies we are ſure, by a numerous ſucceſſion of others, were extant nearer the date of the ſeveral Facts atteſted, and in an Age of Learning, among People of much higher Improvements than the firſt *Mahometans* were; and moreover becauſe it is certain that the Pretences of *Chriſt* were more difficult to be Feigned by himſelf, or Forged by others afterwards; that the Promiſes and Threatnings of the *Goſpel* are of more Concern and Importance to be enquired into; and the Eſtabliſhment of *Chriſtianity*, whether true or falſe in its *Original*, would ſo certainly contribute to the Happineſs of Mankind, that 'tis one very good Argument of its being true, that it is impoſſible to make and contrive any other Scheme every way ſo ſuitable and agreeable to the trueſt Intereſts of *Humane Nature*.

From whence I conclude, that we cannot queſtion the Truth of the *Hiſtory*

of

of Chriſtianity ſo far as concerns the *Common Matters of Fact*, without diſtruſting all the Knowledge we have of every Thing that happen'd at any diſtance from us: And if the *Common Matters of Fact* are true, all the other are plainly demonſtrable from them; as far as we have any certain Knowledge of the *Natures of Things*; as has already been proved: We are therefore obliged either to believe the *Chriſtian Religion*, or to renounce our belief of all other Facts whatſoever; becauſe whatever of this kind we believe beſides, we believe upon *leſs Evidence*.

2. But Secondly, Whatever degree of Evidence other Matters of Fact may be ſuppoſed to have, we are abſolutely obliged to believe *the Chriſtian Religion* upon that Evidence that is brought for it, becauſe we are obliged to believe ſuch Facts as have thoſe *appearances of Truth* the *Chriſtian Religion* has, though they ſhould be *really falſe*.

We are to judge of Things by the Faculties God has given us, according to thoſe grounds and meaſures of Truth he has ſuited and proportion'd to them: and therefore, when we have the greateſt

aſſurance

aſſurance of a Thing that we are capable of according to the *preſent frame our Nature*, and the *State of Things in the World*, it would be highly unreaſonable in us to deny it whatever it was, barely upon a *Suſpicion* it might be falſe, though it ſhould afterwards *really* prove to be ſo; but, if what we had this *apparent* Proof of, was a Matter of concern and importance to us, upon the *Belief* or *Disbelief* of which, our utmoſt *Happineſs* or *Miſery* ſeemed to depend, and we ſhould prefer a *meer Suſpicion* to all the *appearing Marks* and *Characters* of *Truth*, *God* might as juſtly puniſh us for disbelieving a *real Error* upon ſuch grounds, as for rejecting the *Truth*. It is not whether our *Opinions* are *true* or *falſe*, but whether we have *judg'd well* or *ill*, that we are accountable for; neither in Matters of *meer Speculation* is it of much concern whether we *judge well* or *ill*, becauſe it is of no great moment whether we *judge at all*; but it is not indifferent to us whether we will be *happy* or no; *Happineſs* is, and muſt be, the *end* of all our Thoughts, and the governing *Principle* of our Lives; upon this Account it is, as we have ſeen in a

former Diſcourſe, that we are neceſſarily concerned to know, whether there be a *God*, or no; whether he *requires* any thing of us, if there is; and whether he has appointed any *Future State* of Life for us. And theſe things our Reaſon has aſſured us are true, and fit to be believed, notwithſtanding any *Suſpicions* we may have to the contrary, becauſe we venture all our Happineſs by disbelieving them: And upon the ſame Score it is, that the *Chriſtian Religion* challenges our Aſſent to it; becauſe, if all the fore-mentioned Principles be true, we venture our Happineſs as much in denying it. For, if this does not contain the *Will of God*, it is impoſſible to know what is required of us; becauſe we can never give ſo ſtrong, and certain a Proof of what our Particular Duty to God is without *Divine Revelation*, as we can that the *Chriſtian Revelation* is true. We are therefore in as high a manner obliged to believe *Chriſtianity* as *Natural Religion*; becauſe the Proofs of that are very near, if not quite as ſtrong, as thoſe that are brought for the other, and our Happineſs is more certainly ventured here than there, for this reaſon; that, if

the

the *Firſt General Principles of Religion* ſhould be falſe, he that denies them will ſuffer nothing for his denial; but, if thoſe be true, and the *Chriſtian Religion* ſhould be falſe, he that rejects that, runs as great a hazard as if it had been true; becauſe God will certainly Judge him according to the *Evidence*, and not according to the *Reality* of things: And therefore he that believes in *God* is obliged to believe in *Chriſt* alſo; ſince 'tis certain that *the Chriſtian Religion* has a great many Extraordinary *Marks* and *Characters of Truth* to recommend it, and is preſſed upon our Belief under the Conſiderations of *Eternal Happineſs* and *Miſery*, and we have nothing to oppoſe to all the *appearing Evidence* it is built upon, but barely a *Suſpicion*, that notwithſtanding what appears to us, it may *poſſibly* be *falſe*.

The two firſt of theſe Aſſertions are manifeſt; and the Truth of the latter will be very viſible to any one, that will give himſelf the trouble of conſidering *all* the *Objections* that have ever been made to the *Chriſtian Revelation*; which taken altogether, will not ſo much as make out the meer *poſſibility* of the *Chriſtian Scheme*:

being *falſe*; but amount to no more than this, that ſomething elſe, like ſomething contained in the *Hiſtory of Chriſtianity*, has been proved to be falſe, therefore the *Chriſtian Religion* is an *Impoſture*.

For all that has ever been urged againſt the *Truth of the Chriſtian Religion* is, in ſhort, but this; that *Hiſtories* have been *falſe*; *Prophecies* and *Miracles* have been *counterfeit*; there have been *falſe* Pretences to *Revelation*; *Books* have been *forged*; *ſtrange Things* have been *ſaid* and *done* by *Men*, and *ſtranger* by *Evil Spirits*: But it can no more be inferr'd from hence, that the *Chriſtian Hiſtory* and *Revelation*, and all the *Chriſtian Prophecies* and *Miracles* are *falſe*, and the *Scriptures of the New Teſtament* are *forged*; than it can be concluded that *all* Men are *mad* or *aſleep*, becauſe there have been ſeveral in theſe Conditions that have thought themſelves *awake* and in *their Senſes*; or that all the Arguments and Proofs made uſe of in *Mathematical* Knowledge are falſe, becauſe ſome pretended Demonſtrations have been Undemonſtrated and Confuted: And yet this is the utmoſt defence that *Infidelity* can make for it ſelf, as has before been

been more particularly ſhewn. Wherefore they are utterly inexcuſable, whoever they are, who believe *there is a God*, and *that he is a Rewarder of all thoſe that diligently ſeek him*; and yet reject ſo *plain* and *evident* a *Revelation* of himſelf as the *Chriſtian Religion* is.

But there are very few, I believe, of this Character to be found in the *Chriſtian* World: 'Tis more reaſonable to think, that thoſe among us, who will not have the *Son of God to Reign over them*, have as little regard for *the Father that ſent him*; and that if they will not *hear Moſes and the Prophets*, nor be *perſwaded by one that roſe from the Dead*, neither will they *underſtand the Eternal Power and Godhead by the things that are made*. And if this be the Caſe of our Modern *Deiſts* and *Unbelievers*; if their *Minds are Blinded*, and their *fooliſh Hearts Darkned* to ſuch a degree that they cannot perceive God in any of the other ways he has took of *Revealing* himſelf to them, we muſt leave them to be convinced by the laſt *Revelation* that will be made *of the Righteous Judgment of God*, when they ſhall be forced to *Believe* and *Tremble*.

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